



**Natural Resources Conservation Service – Caribbean Area**

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# Disability Special Emphasis Program

## What is the Disability Special Emphasis Program (DSEP)?

The DSEP is part of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program. The objectives of this program are to:

- 1) Ensure that persons with disabilities receive equal treatment in all aspects of employment.
- 2) Increase the number of persons with disabilities employed in all professional, administrative, technical, clerical, and other categories, series, and grade levels.
- 3) Provide opportunities to persons with disabilities to participate in training, career development, and leadership programs.
- 4) Encourage the participation of persons with disabilities in all NRCS-sponsored programs and activities.
- 5) Provide a network of professional support for persons with disabilities.
- 6) Provide mentoring support to persons with disabilities in the workforce.
- 7) Educate all NRCS employees by raising their level of awareness about workplace issues and concerns that persons with disabilities have.

## Who is the Caribbean Area Disability Special Emphasis Program Manager?

Michelle Catoni has been the USDA-NRCS Caribbean Area Disability Special Emphasis Program Manager since December 2013.



*“I am aware of the challenges that persons with disabilities like me have to overcome every day.”*

For questions or concerns about the DSEP, please contact Michelle at the NRCS San Sebastian Field Office at 787-896-3565, x.105 or [michelle.catoni@pr.usda.gov](mailto:michelle.catoni@pr.usda.gov).

## Americans with Disabilities Act



The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H.W. Bush. The ADA is one of America's most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation. It prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life – to enjoy employment opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in State and local government programs and services. Modeled after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin – and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – the ADA is an "equal opportunity" law for people with disabilities.

To be protected by the ADA, one must have a disability. A disability is defined by the ADA as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered. For more information, please visit [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov).

# Color Blindness and Conservation Maps

by Michelle Catoni, DSEPM

Have you ever wondered if the conservation map that you have prepared is understandable to your clients, or if the colors can be distinguished on the map? For some people, it is very difficult to distinguish between colors because they are color blind.

According to the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, color blindness or color deficiency is the inability to see certain colors. There are color-sensing pigments in the nerve cells of the eye that pick up red, blue, or green light. People with color blindness lack some or all of these pigments. If just one pigment is missing, it may be difficult to see the difference between red and green or between blue and yellow. The most common type of color blindness is red-green color blindness. About 1 in 12 men have some form of color blindness. The most severe form of color blindness is *achromatopsia*. A person with this rare condition cannot see any color, so everything is in shades of gray.

**How can I make conservation maps visible for everyone?** An easy way to verify if a particular color on the conservation map can be seen by persons that are color blind is by printing the map in black and white. If you can clearly see the lines and symbols in the black and white copy, they will too.



**For example: Red-Green color blind people will not be able to see the red-green colors in the map above left; they will see the color like in the black & white version, above right. Therefore, we need to adjust the colors and symbols on the map to be visible to people who are color blind. If we change the red-colored lines or symbols to yellow, a person who is color blind will be able to see them (see pictures on next page).**



It is very important that our customers completely understand all the information we are providing to avoid any misunderstanding. That's why we have to be aware of any disability or problem that the person may have.

**Don't be afraid...ASK!** Next time you make a conservation map: ask the customer if he or she understands it, or if it is necessary to adjust it for him or her.

