

Fact Sheet: Conservation Stewardship Program

August 2009

Overview

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) encourages agricultural and forestry producers to maintain existing conservation activities and adopt additional ones on their operations. CSP is a new voluntary conservation program that provides financial and technical assistance to conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. CSP provides opportunities to both recognize excellent stewards and deliver valuable new conservation.

Eligibility

CSP is available on Tribal and private agricultural lands, as well as nonindustrial private forest lands in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Caribbean and Pacific Islands Areas. The program provides equitable access to all producers, regardless of operation size, crops produced, or geographic location.

Individual producers, legal entities, corporations, and Indian Tribes may be eligible for the program. Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

Applicants must:

- Be the operator of record in the USDA farm records management system for the eligible land being offered for enrollment;

- Have documented control of the land for the term of the proposed contract;
- Include the eligible land in their entire operation as represented for other USDA programs;
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions of 7 CFR Part 12, and adjusted gross income provisions of 7 CFR part 1400.

Benefits to Participants

CSP provides participants with two possible types of payments. An annual payment is available for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing activities. A supplemental payment may be earned by participants receiving an annual payment who also adopt a resource-conserving crop rotation.

Through 5-year contracts, payments will be made as soon as practical after October of each year for contract activities installed and maintained in the previous year. For all contracts, CSP payments to a person or legal entity may not exceed \$40,000 in any year, and \$200,000 during any 5-year period. Each CSP contract will be limited to \$200,000 over the term of the initial contract period.

How CSP Works

NRCS at the State level, in consultation with the State Technical Committee and local working groups, will focus CSP on natural resources that are of specific concern for a State. Agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land will be ranked separately.



Producers interested in CSP are encouraged to begin the application process by completing a producer self-screening checklist. The self-screening checklist helps potential applicants decide for themselves whether CSP is the right program for them. The level of environmental benefit to be achieved will be estimated to determine eligibility, rank applications, and establish payments.

For a pre-approved applicant, NRCS will request the applicant's conservation activity records and conduct on-site field verification to ensure that information provided by the applicant was accurate prior to contract approval. Once information is verified, NRCS and the applicant proceed to develop the contract.

More Information

For more information and updates about the Farm Bill, visit www.usda.gov/farmbill, or the NRCS Web site at www.nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill; for more information on CSP, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/new_csp.