



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

## Is CSP Right For Me?



**The Conservation Stewardship  
Program Helps Agricultural  
Producers Take Their  
Conservation To The Next Level,  
With Financial & Technical  
Assistance.**

## Can You Answer Yes To The Following?

- ☐ I own, rent, or manage land for agricultural production, such as cropland, rangeland, grassland, pasture, or non-industrial private forestland.
- ☐ I have already been doing conservation work on my agricultural operation.
- ☐ I want to expand my existing conservation efforts to achieve a higher level of environmental stewardship.
- ☐ I have performed conservation practices on my land either with assistance from NRCS or another organization, or on my own.
- ☐ I intend or plan to maintain control of the land for at least five years.
- ☐ My land complies with highly erodible land and wetland determination provisions. If you're unsure, ask your local USDA Service Center.
- ☐ I have a social security number or employer identification number issued by the IRS.
- ☐ If I'm associated with an entity or organization, I have signature authority to make management decisions on the land.



## **What Is The Conservation Stewardship Program?**

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) offers technical and financial assistance to help agricultural producers take their conservation efforts to the next level.

CSP is designed to reward producers who are already doing conservation on their operation, while also incentivising them to adopt additional conservation activities that go above and beyond regular Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) standards.

## **How Long Is A CSP Contract?**

5 years, with the option to renew for another 5 year period, if you successfully complete your first contract and your renewal application ranks high enough. Renewals are a competitive process.

## **How Does CSP Work?**

CSP offers opportunities to expand on existing conservation efforts by applying conservation practices, enhancements, and bundles.

For example, if you have been planting cover crops, you may decide to implement a deep-rooted cover crop to break up soil compaction.

If you decide to apply for CSP, your local NRCS conservation planner will have a one-on-one consultation with you to evaluate your current management system and the natural resources on your land. Then the NRCS conservation planner will present a variety of CSP conservation activities for you to choose from.

CSP offers annual payments for installing these activities on your land, as well as operating and maintaining your current conservation efforts.

## **What Are The Benefits?**

CSP provides many benefits, including increased crop productivity, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements, and increased resilience to weather extremes.

CSP also encourages adoption of new technologies and management techniques to help you continue and grow your conservation efforts.

For example, CSP can help schedule timely planting of cover crops, develop a grazing plan that will improve your forage base, implement no-till to reduce erosion, or manage forested areas in a way that benefits wildlife habitats.

If you're already taking steps to improve the condition of your land, chances are CSP can help you find new ways to meet your goals.

# CSP Eligibility

## Land Eligibility

### What Lands Are Eligible For CSP?

Eligible lands include private agricultural lands, cropland, pastureland, rangeland, non-industrial private forestland, farmstead, and associated agricultural lands.

There is no minimum acreage requirement since CSP enrolls your entire operation into the program, not just one specific field or tract. Land uses that may be enrolled in the program are cropland, pasture, non-industrial private forestland, farmstead, and associated agricultural lands. All land must be in compliance with USDA highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions to be eligible for CSP.

## Producer Eligibility

### Who Is Eligible To Apply For CSP?

Applicants may include individuals, legal entities, joint operations, Indian tribes, or Alaska Native Organizations that own, rent, or manage land for agricultural production and are currently engaged in agricultural production.

The applicant must have either a social security number or employer identification number issued by the IRS. They must also maintain control of the land for the entire span of the 5 year CSP contract.

## Stewardship Threshold Eligibility

### What Is The Stewardship Threshold?

Steward threshold is a term NRCS uses to determine if an applicant is currently meeting or exceeding an adequate level of conservation criteria for a particular natural resource concern.

Applicants must currently meet the stewardship threshold for at least two natural resource concerns on every land use included in the operation.

They must also agree to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for at least one additional resource concern by the end of the contract on at least one land use.



**Don't Worry If You're Unsure Of Your Threshold, Your NRCS Planner Will Help You Find That Out.**

# Resource Concerns

## What Is A Resource Concern?

A resource concern is defined as an expected degradation of soil, water, air, plant, or animal resource base to an extent the sustainability or intended use of the resource is impaired.

NRCS quantifies or describes resource concerns as part of a comprehensive conservation planning process that includes client objectives, human and energy resources are considered components of the resource base.

## CSP Resource Concerns

There are up to 47 resource concerns that your NRCS conservation planner will evaluate as part of your CSP application that include 17 national CSP Resource Concerns.

1. Air Quality Emissions
2. Degraded Plant Condition
3. Fire Management
4. Pest Pressure
5. Inefficient Energy Use
6. Livestock Production Limitation
7. Aquatic Habitat
8. Field Pesticide Loss
9. Field, Sediment, Nutrient and Pathogen Loss
10. Salt Losses to Water
11. Storage and Handling of Pollutants
12. Soil Quality Limitation
13. Source Water Depletion
14. Terrestrial Habitat
15. Weather Resilience
16. Concentrated Erosion
17. Wind and Water Erosion

## How Can I Learn About Different Resource Concerns That Might Affect My Operation?

Check out the “Conservation Concerns Tool” on Farmers.gov to learn about different types of conservation issues that might impact the productivity or natural resources on your farm, ranch, or forest. This user-friendly, simple online tool gives you options to build a list of concerns to discuss with your local NRCS conservation planner.

## How Many Resource Concerns Do I Need To Meet At The Time Of Application?

Two on every land use included in your operation. An NRCS conservation planner must be able to document that you are currently managing and implementing conservation activities to sufficiently improve two resource concerns on the land. You will also pick a third resource concern to address through CSP.

For CSP contract renewal the criteria is different, and a competitive process. Your local NRCS will be able to help you through this process when the time comes.



**Scan The QR Code With Your Phone's Camera Or QR Reader App To Visit The Conservation Concerns tool.**  
**[www.farmers.gov/conserve/tool](http://www.farmers.gov/conserve/tool)**



## Practices, Enhancements, & Bundles

### What Is A Conservation Practice?

A conservation practice is an action that you willingly apply to your operation with guidance from NRCS.

Conservation Practices can improve soil, water, plants, air, wildlife habitat, and related natural resources. For example, 'forest stand improvement' is a commonly used conservation practice in which dense, overstocked forests are thinned to allow for improved tree health and habitat, as well as reduced risk of fire.

### What Is An Enhancement?

Through CSP, producers have the opportunity to further improve their conservation efforts with conservation activities called "enhancements." Enhancements allow a producer to address additional levels of conservation beyond what the minimum conservation practice standard requires.

CSP applicants work one-on-one with their NRCS conservation planner to select enhancements that best fit their management goals and that will address resource concerns on the enrolled operation.

### What Is A Bundle?

CSP Applicants who want to increase their conservation stewardship even further may consider "bundles" of enhancement activities. Some enhancements work together to provide increased conservation benefits when they are implemented as a group. Producers may consider adopting these enhancement groups or "bundles" on their operation.

Each Bundle has three or more required enhancements, and for some bundles, the applicant has the option to pick additional enhancements from a select list that address specific resource concerns.

Bundles have enhancements grouped according to land use:

crop, pasture, range, and forest, as well as agency initiatives such as working lands for wildlife. Bundles also receive a higher level of financial assistance to encourage the holistic approach to generate additional conservation benefits.

Producers interested in implementing practices, enhancements, or bundles on their property can visit with their local NRCS conservation planner to learn more about them.

**No One Knows Your Land Better Than You, And No One Knows Conservation Like Us. Together We Can Develop A Plan Tailored To Your Land And Your Goals.**

# CSP Payments

## What Types Of Payments Are Offered Through CSP?

Contract payments are based on two components:

1. Payments to maintain the existing level of conservation based on the land uses included in the contract and NRCS assessment of existing stewardship at the time of enrollment.
2. Payments to implement additional activities.

## When Are Payments Made?

Payments are made as soon as practical after October 1 of each fiscal year for contract activities installed and maintained in the previous year.

## Is There A Minimum Annual Payment?

Yes. A minimum annual payment of \$4,000 applies to all CSP contracts.

## Do I Have To Pay Income Taxes On My Payments?

Yes. All payments made to you by NRCS are reported to the Internal Revenue Service and should be reported as income on your tax return for the applicable tax year. You will receive a form 1099 to report CSP payments on your tax return.



# CSP Application & Evaluation

## How Do I Apply For CSP?

Contact your local NRCS field office and let them know you are interested in CSP. A conservation planner will work with you to determine your stewardship threshold eligibility.

If you are new to working with USDA, you will need to establish your Farm Record with the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Establishing a Farm Record requires several forms and documents, so make an appointment with your FSA

office as soon as possible. In addition to your Farm Record documents, you will also need to submit to NRCS:

- CPA-1200 - Conservation Program Application
- Map showing all land in the Ag operation, uses and acres in the operation, so eligible and ineligible land can be identified.

## How Are Applications Evaluated?

Once NRCS completes an assessment of your operation and you choose the

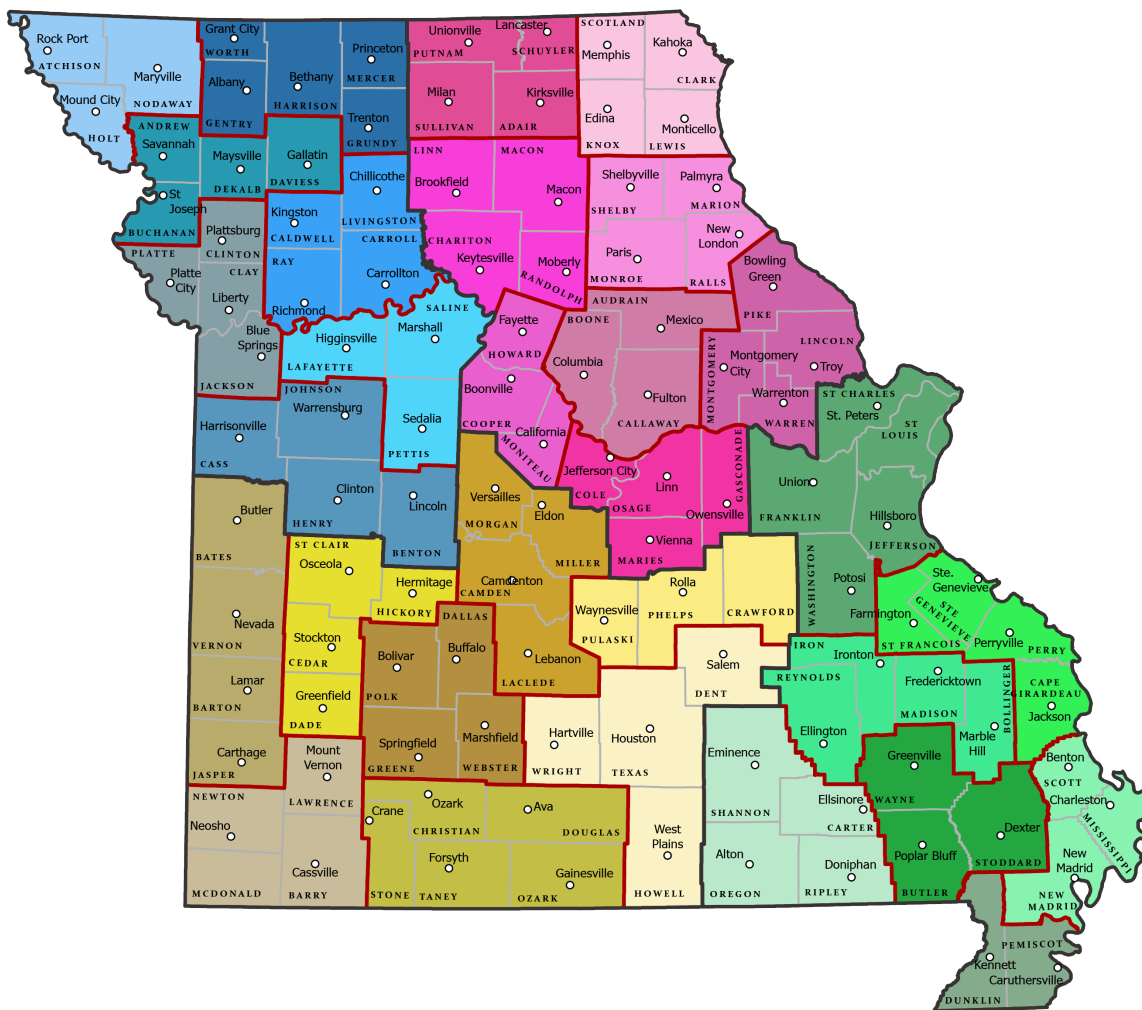
conservation activities you will implement, NRCS will rank your application to determine how well your current and future management system will address national, state, and local natural resource priorities.

NRCS will rank your application against other eligible applications that have similar resource challenges in the same local ranking pool, with the highest scoring applications receiving contract offers first.

## Notes

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# Find Your Local NRCS Field Office



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Visit Us Online

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/nrcs/missouri>

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