

Kansas Farmers Have Until May 5 to Renew CSP Contracts

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is now accepting applications to re-enroll in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) through May 5, 2017. This renewal option is specifically for farmers and ranchers who enrolled in CSP initially in 2013. Kansas has over 400,000 acres enrolled in 243 contracts that will expire this year.

CSP is a comprehensive working lands conservation program that provides technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers to actively manage and maintain existing conservation systems and to implement additional conservation activities on land in production. Through CSP, participants take steps to improve soil, water, air, and habitat quality, and can also address water quantity and energy conservation issues.

CSP contracts last for five years, at which time they are eligible for renewal. There are approximately 7,000 farmers and ranchers nationwide with CSP contracts that will expire this year, totaling over 9.5 million acres that need to be re-enrolled to preserve and expand upon critical environmental benefits.

It Pays to Renew

It is optional to renew an expiring contract, and participants who do not re-enroll can always re-apply and compete for funding in future annual CSP signups. NRCS has already mailed letters to all CSP participants with contracts that are set to expire this year. The producer must then sign up for the renewal offer by May 5, 2017. Local NRCS offices will then follow up with the producer to discuss renewal criteria and new conservation options; the producer then can decide whether to sign up for another five-year contract.

For more information on the program and the process for signing up, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) has released two free resources. NSAC's newly revised Information Alert includes details on how to renew expiring contracts, as well as details regarding the changes that were part of the recent CSP "Reinvention," which included major changes to the program this year. These changes are particularly important to participants renewing this year, as their renewal process will look significantly different from when they first enrolled in 2013.

NSAC has also published an updated version of our Farmers' Guide to the Conservation Stewardship Program. Download the comprehensive guide from NSAC's website.

The renewal process should be fairly simple. Producers with expiring contracts can contact their local NRCS office.