

USDA Offers Renewal Options for Expiring Conservation Contracts

Agricultural producers wanting to enhance current conservation efforts are encouraged to renew their [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) (CStP) contract.

Through CStP, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps private landowners build their business while implementing conservation practices that help ensure the sustainability of their entire operation.

Participants with existing CStP contracts expiring on Dec. 31, 2018 can access the benefits of the recent program changes through an option to renew their contracts for an additional five years if they agree to adopt additional activities to achieve higher levels of conservation on their lands.

NRCS will mail contract renewal notification letters to all participants whose contracts expire in 2018, which will contain instructions on how to apply for renewal.

Applications to renew expiring contracts are due by April 13, 2018

Through CStP, agricultural producers and forest landowners earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, nutrient management, residue management, grazing management, prescribed burning, and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat – all while maintaining active agriculture production on their land. CStP also encourages the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and new management techniques such as precision agriculture applications, on-site carbon storage and planting for high carbon sequestration rate, and new soil amendments to improve water quality.

Some of these benefits of CStP include:

- Improved cattle gains per acre;
- Increased crop yields;
- Decreased inputs;
- Wildlife population improvements; and
- Better resilience to weather extremes.

NRCS recently made several updates to the program to help producers better evaluate their conservation options and the benefits to their operations and natural resources. New methods and software for evaluating applications help producers see up front why they are or are not meeting stewardship thresholds, and allow them to pick practices and enhancements that work for their conservation objectives.

These tools also enable producers to see potential payment scenarios for conservation early in the process.

Producers interested in CStP are recommended to contact their [local USDA service center](#) or visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted.