

USDA Announces Sign-Up Period for Updated Conservation Stewardship Program

The deadline for Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications to be considered for funding in fiscal year 2019 is May 10, 2019.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) plans to invest up to \$700 million for new enrollments and contract extensions in fiscal year 2019. The 2018 Farm Bill made several changes to this critical conservation program, which helps agricultural producers take the conservation activities on their farm or ranch to the next level.

"CSP continues to be a very effective tool for private landowners working to achieve their conservation and management goals," said Craig Derickson, Nebraska NRCS state conservationist. "It is the largest conservation program in the United States with more than 70 million acres of productive agricultural and forest land enrolled."

CSP is a popular program for Nebraska's ag producers. Over 5 million acres are currently under contract in Nebraska. In 2018, over 550 farmers and ranchers enrolled over 1.3 million acres into CSP.

While applications are accepted throughout the year, interested producers should submit applications to their local NRCS office by May 10, 2019, to ensure their applications are considered for 2019 funding.

Changes to the Program

The 2018 Farm Bill authorizes NRCS to accept new CSP enrollments from now until 2023, and it makes some important improvements to the program. These updates include:

- NRCS now enrolls eligible, high ranking applications based on dollars rather than acres. For fiscal year 2019, NRCS can spend up to \$700 million in the program, which covers part of the cost for producers implementing new conservation activities and maintaining their existing activities.**
- Higher payment rates are now available for certain conservation activities, including cover crops and resource conserving crop rotations.**
- CSP now provides specific support for organic and for transitioning to organic production activities and a special grassland conservation initiative for certain producers who have maintained cropland base acres.**

About the Program

CSP provides many benefits including increased crop yields, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements and increased resilience to weather extremes. CSP is for working lands including cropland, pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of a tribe.

More Information

For additional information about CSP, contact your [local USDA service center](#).