The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary program offered by NRCS on private agricultural land and non-industrial private forest land.

**Program Purpose**

CSP rewards landowners for already achieving a high threshold of conservation in at least one area of conservation, such as water quality, and encourages landowners to further improve their natural resources by undertaking additional resource enhancement activities.

**Eligibility Information**

In order for you to be considered for CSP, all of the land you control will need to be enrolled in the program application and be eligible.

If you have agricultural land and non-industrial private forest land you may choose to enroll both of these land types in CSP, by completing two separate applications, one for each land type.

You will need to have documented control of the land you wish to enroll for the term of the proposed contract, five years.

You will need to have up to date records in the USDA farm records management system with the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

You will need to be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions of 7 CFR Part 12, and adjusted gross income (AGI) provisions of 7 CFR part 1400. If you are an entity, each member of the entity will also need to complete the AGI form.

Other eligibility requirements include not having any readily observable erosion or point sources of contamination such as gullies, manure runoff or pesticide runoff at the farm headquarters, barnyards, manure storage facilities, landing sites, sugar houses or any other developed areas on the farm that are not used for production.

When asked, you will need to supply NRCS with information necessary to determine eligibility and to rank the application. Requested information may include documents such as conservation and production records, tax documentation, and evidence documenting control of the land.

Applicants are not eligible to receive payment for enhancement activities that they are already doing on the same footprint of land.

CSP rewards farmers for installing conservation practices such as buffers.

**CSP Sign Up Information**

Applications are accepted for CSP at anytime. There could be a sign up announcement for CSP as early as next month so if you’re interested in the program submit your application (the NRCS-CPA-1200) as soon as you can. You can get an application at your local NRCS office or online.

When considering if CSP is the right program for you, you should begin by completing the Producer Self-Screening Checklist, which you can get online or at your local NRCS field office. This checklist will assist you in determining whether or not the land you control meets the minimum eligibility for this program.
Once you’ve completed the self-screening checklist and submitted your application to NRCS, you may need to make an appointment with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) office in your county to complete the necessary AGI for 2010 and highly erodible land and wetland forms if you do not already have these forms on file and up to date. You will also need to verify that you are listed as the owner/operator or operator for all the land you control with FSA.

A local NRCS representative will be contacting you mid June to make an appointment at your local NRCS office to sit down with a conservationist and complete the ranking document. This appointment could take two or more hours to complete the ranking. Those applicants with the highest ranking points in their ranking pool will be preapproved for funding.

If your application is preapproved for funding, a field verification will be made. An NRCS representative will verify that all the questions in the ranking tool were answered appropriately. If changes need to be made to your ranking tool based on this verification, your final ranking score could increase or decrease.

Payments will be made based on your final ranking score.

**Enhancement Availability**
Participants need to agree to adopt at least one nationally created enhancement in their contract.

Enhancements include activities such as extending existing buffers, extending the years of hay land in your existing crop rotation or adding additional plant species to your existing crop rotation to benefit wildlife, hardwood crop tree release, and conifer crop tree release.

Enhancement bundles are also available to participants during this round of funding. Bundles are a group of at least five enhancements that positively address at least three resource concerns including air quality, water quality, and animals (wildlife).