Application: What You Need

- Pre-Screening Tool
- Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT)
- Signed CSP Application
- Completed Direct Deposit Form
- Completed Control of Land Form

Payments

Through **five-year contracts**, NRCS makes payments after October 1 for contract activities installed and maintained in the previous fiscal year (Oct. 1 - Sept. 30).

- **Payment Limit.** A person or legal entity may have more than one CSP contract, but for all CSP contracts combined, may not receive more than $40,000 in any year or more than $200,000 during any five-year period.
- **Contract Limit.** The contract limit is the same as the payment limit except in the case of joint operations, for which the contract limit is $80,000 per fiscal year and $400,000 over the term of the contract period.

Payment limits and contract limits do not apply in the case of federally recognized Indian tribes or Alaska Native corporations.

Participants who are historically underserved producers (limited resource farmers, beginning farmers, or socially disadvantaged farmers) may receive a minimum payment of $1,000 if the contract amount in any given year is less than that amount.

CSP Application Process

Signing Up

NRCS makes CSP available through continuous sign-up, with announced cut-off dates for ranking and funding applications.

Application Rankings

Applications are evaluated and ranked. (Agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land applications are ranked separately.) In the ranking process, producers get credit for:

- conservation measures they have already implemented, and
- new measures they agree to add.

Self-Screening

Potential applicants are encouraged to determine whether CSP is right for them by completing the self-screening checklist and reviewing the CSP Conservation Activity List to identify new conservation activities they might install.

Because some conservation enhancements work better when implemented as a group, the activity list identifies enhancement "bundles" that receive both higher rankings and higher payments. Both the checklist and the activity list are available on the national NRCS website at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp/.

If an applicant is pre-approved for funding, NRCS requests the applicant's conservation activity records and conducts on-site field verification to ensure that the information provided is accurate. Once the information is verified, NRCS and the applicant proceed to develop the contract.

More Information

For more information about CSP, visit your local NRCS office located at USDA Service Centers in every Iowa county. CSP information is also available on the national website at www.nrcs.usda.gov or the Iowa NRCS website at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov.

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Natural Resources Conservation Service
www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov

Iowa - 2014

What is CSP?

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary USDA program that encourages agricultural and forestry producers to address resource concerns by:

1. undertaking additional conservation activities (enhancements) and
2. maintaining and improving existing conservation systems.

CSP provides financial and technical assistance to help land stewards conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land.

Protecting Resources

CSP addresses the following **resource concerns**:

- soil quality
- soil erosion
- water quality
- water quantity
- air quality
- plant resources
- animal resources
- energy

Who is eligible?

CSP is available to all producers, regardless of operation size or crops produced.

Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, nonindustrial private forest land, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

Applicants may include individuals, legal entities, joint operations, or Indian tribes. They must:

- be the operator of record in the USDA farm records management system for the eligible land being offered for enrollment;
- have effective control of the land for the term of the proposed contract and be able to produce records documenting that control;

- be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions and adjusted gross income provisions; and
- include the eligible land in their entire agricultural or forestry operation.

What are the benefits?

CSP pays participants for conservation performance — the higher the environmental performance, the higher the payment.

It provides two possible types of payments:

1. An **annual payment** is available for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing practices.
2. A **supplemental payment** is available to participants who also adopt a resource-conserving crop rotation.

An equal opportunity provider and employer.

STEWARDSHIP ACROSS IOWA

CSP SUCCESS

"No-till is an advantage in the long run on your bottom line. It takes less machinery, less fuel, and less time to farm."

JACK BENSINK earned his CSP contract in 2010 after no-tilling for about 25 years on his 400-acre farm near Pleasantville. He also has several other erosion control practices on his cropland, such as buffer strips, terraces, field borders and grassed waterways.

Bensink's farm is heavy on wildlife habitat, with plenty of CRP ground, timber and switchgrass. He also believes strongly in renewable energy. Bensink installed a small wind turbine and solar panels.

Enhancement:

- Shallow Water Habitat

Bensink says he has the perfect five-acre site, which will basically be a small pond or wetland that holds water seasonally. This area will attract wildlife that needs shallow water areas to lay eggs.

CSP SUCCESS

"Like so many farmers, I started using cover crops for erosion control. I wish I started using them 40 years ago."

Joe Kriegel farms about 2,000 acres on a few farms with his three sons in Poweshiek County. In 2013, he earned a CSP contract on more than 1,000 cropland acres.

He began incorporating cover crop acres into his no-till corn and soybean rotation in 2009. Along with fall seeding cereal rye on all of his cropland acres, Kriegel also harvests the cereal rye seed and grows other cover crops, including oats, clover, and sorghum sudangrass.

Enhancements:

- Cover crop mixes
- Extending existing field borders
- Using drift-reducing nozzles on pesticide applications
- Using nitrogen provided by legume cover crops to reduce nitrogen needs
- Nitrification inhibitors

CSP SUCCESS

Brent and Teresa Voss earned a CSP contract in 2010 for the suite of practices they have applied on their rural Dallas County farm that address wildlife habitat, soil erosion, water quality, and pasture management.

The couple grow corn and soybeans on 1,500 acres and graze livestock on 262 pasture acres. They also have more than 500 feeder cattle. The Vosses say it has been exciting and fun working with NRCS to install conservation practices and strategies to be better stewards of the land.

Enhancements:

- Grow cover crops to scavenge residual nitrogen
- Harvest hay to allow wildlife to flush and escape
- Implement resource-conserving crop rotations
- Continuous no-till with high residue
- Test and analyze plant tissue for nitrogen
- Monitor key grazing areas to improve management

"We have learned a lot from NRCS about how to properly manage and take care of livestock in an environmentally-friendly way."

What is a CSP Enhancement?

A CSP "Enhancement" is a conservation activity used to treat natural resources and improve conservation performance. Enhancement activities exceed the sustainable level for a given resource concern.

Common CSP Enhancements in Iowa

Air

- Using drift reducing nozzles, low pressures, lower boom height and adjuvants to reduce pesticide drift.
- GPS, targeted spray application, or other chemical application electronic control technology.
- Nitrification inhibitors or urease inhibitors.*

Animal

- Harvesting hay to allow wildlife to flush and escape.
- Retrofitting water facilities to allow wildlife to escape and enhance access for bats and bird species.

Plant

- Renovation of a windbreak, shelterbelt or hedgerow for wildlife habitat.
- Intensive rotational grazing.*
- High residue cover crop (or mixtures) to suppress weeds and improve soil health.*

Soil

- Intensive no-till.*
- Use of cover crop mixes.*

Water

- Plant tissue tests and analysis to improve nitrogen management.*
- Split nitrogen application. (50% after crop emergence or pasture green up)*
- Cover crops to scavenge residual nitrogen.*
- Precision application technology to apply nutrients.*

*** This enhancement supports the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.**