

Conservation Measurement Tool

Conservation Performance Scoring

All Conservation Stewardship Program applications are evaluated using the Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT). Using a point based scoring system; CMT measures the environmental benefits, or conservation performance, associated with each application. The CMT evaluates existing and proposed new activities to calculate conservation performance points that will be used for stewardship eligibility determinations, ranking, and payment purposes. The CMT is size neutral ensuring that all operations, despite the size of each operation, have the same potential to accrue a similar number of existing activity points.

Environmental benefits, or conservation performance, are scored for both existing activity questions and additional activities, using the Conservation Practice Physical Effects scoring system of -5 to +5. Points for the seven resource concerns plus energy have been established nationally for each question and additional activity. Each land use is evaluated independently to determine if program stewardship eligibility requirements are met, calculate existing and additional conservation performance points, and ranking score.

Meeting Stewardship Eligibility Requirements

Existing activity conservation performance points are calculated by resource concern for each land use by dividing the existing activity points by the potential existing activity points and multiplying by 100. Existing activity conservation performance points are compared to stewardship threshold values established by land use for each resource concern to determine if minimum stewardship eligibility requirements are met.

Annual Payments – Conservation Performance Points

A split-rate annual payment structure will be used to provide separate payments for existing and additional conservation activities in order to place emphasis on implementing additional conservation. Calculations for existing activity conservation performance points are defined above. Additional activity conservation performance points are calculated by resource concern for each land use by dividing the actual additional activity points by the potential additional activity points and multiplying by 100.

If a resource conserving crop rotation is scheduled, the additional activity points associated with this activity are subtracted from the cropland additional activity conservation performance points.

Conservation Performance Ranking Score

The conservation performance ranking score is used to determine the priority of funding for an applicant within a ranking pool. Applicants will be funded starting with the highest score and working down the list until acres and/or funds are exhausted.

The conservation performance ranking score is based on 4 factors:

1. The level of conservation treatment on all applicable priority resource concerns at the time of application.
2. The degree to which the proposed conservation treatment on applicable priority resource concerns increases conservation performance.
3. The number of priority resource concerns proposed to be treated to meet or exceed stewardship thresholds by the end of the contract.
4. The extent to which other resource concerns, in addition to priority resource concerns, will be addressed to meet or exceed stewardship thresholds by the end of the contract.

Each ranking factor is multiplied by a weighting factor that is currently set at 25% for each factor. The final ranking score is the sum of the four weighted factors.