



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM IS CSP RIGHT FOR ME?

CAN YOU ANSWER YES TO THE FOLLOWING?

- ☐ I own, rent or manage land for agricultural production, such as cropland, rangeland, grassland, pasture or non-industrial private forestland. (Lands managed for food and fiber production including subsistence activities is considered agricultural land)
- ☐ I have already been doing conservation work on my agricultural operation.
- ☐ I want to expand my existing conservation efforts to achieve a higher level of environmental stewardship.
- ☐ I have performed conservation practices on my land either with assistance from NRCS or another organization, or on my own.
- ☐ I intend or plan to maintain control of the land for at least 5 years.
- ☐ My land complies with highly erodible land and wetland determination provisions (if unsure, ask you local USDA Service Center)
- ☐ I have a social security number or employer identification number issued by the IRS.
- ☐ My adjusted gross income is less than \$900,000 (does not apply to Native American Tribes or Alaska Native entities).
- ☐ If I'm associated with an entity/ organization, I have signature authority to make management decisions on the land.

*THE CONSERVATION
STEWARDSHIP
PROGRAM OFFERS
TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL
ASSISTANCE TO
HELP AGRICULTURAL
PRODUCERS TAKE THEIR
CONSERVATION EFFORTS
TO THE NEXT LEVEL.*



USDA NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE - ALASKA



YOUR STEWARDSHIP GOALS. OUR ASSISTANCE.

What is CSP?

The **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** offers technical and financial assistance to help agricultural producers take their conservation efforts to the next level.

The program is designed to reward agricultural producers who are already doing a baseline level of conservation on their operation, while also incentivizing them to adopt additional conservation activities that go above and beyond regular NRCS conservation practice standards. CSP is for producers who are passionate about conservation and environmental stewardship.

What are the benefits?

CSP provides many benefits including increased crop productivity, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements and increased resilience to weather extremes. CSP also encourages adoption of new technologies and management techniques.

For example, CSP can help you schedule timely planting of cover crops, develop a grazing plan that will improve your forage base, implement no-till to reduce erosion or manage forested areas in a way that benefits wildlife habitat. If you are already taking steps to improve the condition of the land, chances are CSP can help you find new ways to meet your goals.

How does CSP work?

CSP offers opportunities to expand on existing conservation efforts by applying conservation practices, enhancements and bundles. For example, if you have been planting a cover crop, you may decide to try an enhancement for a multi-species cover crop or implement a deep-rooted cover crop to break up soil compaction.

If you decide to apply for CSP, the local NRCS conservation planner will have a one-on-one consultation with you to evaluate your current management system and the

Have you ever looked across your property and thought about some land management goals you would like to take to the next level? Maybe we can help.

No one knows more about your land than you do, and no one knows more about conservation than we do. Together we can develop a plan tailored to your land and your goals to help you increase productivity and protect the value of your land.

natural resources on your land. Then the NRCS conservation planner will present a variety of CSP conservation activities for you to choose from.

CSP offers annual payments for installing these activities on your land and operating and maintaining your current conservation efforts.

How long is a CSP contract?

5 years, with the option to renew for another 5-year period if you successfully complete your first contract term, and if your renewal application ranks high enough (CSP renewals are a competitive process).

CSP ELIGIBILITY

LAND ELIGIBILITY

What lands are eligible for CSP?

Eligible lands include private agricultural lands, cropland, pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land, and farmstead and associated agricultural lands. In Alaska, NRCS considers any land producing food or fiber, including subsistence hunting and gathering lands, as agricultural land. There is no minimum acreage requirement. CSP enrolls your entire operation into the program, not just one specific field or tract. Land uses that may be enrolled in the program are cropland, rangeland, pasture, non-industrial private forestland, and associated agricultural lands such as barns, your homestead and equipment facilities. All land must be in compliance with USDA highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions to be eligible for CSP.

I am new to farming and in the process of clearing non-ag land to create a farm. Am I eligible for CSP?

Not yet. The land must be actively used for producing an agricultural product. Lands being cleared or prepped for future agricultural production are not eligible for CSP until an agricultural operation has been established and crops, food or fiber have been successfully produced. Be sure that you check with USDA for highly erodible land and wetland compliance before clearing sod or 'sod busting.'

PRODUCER ELIGIBILITY

Who is eligible to apply for CSP?

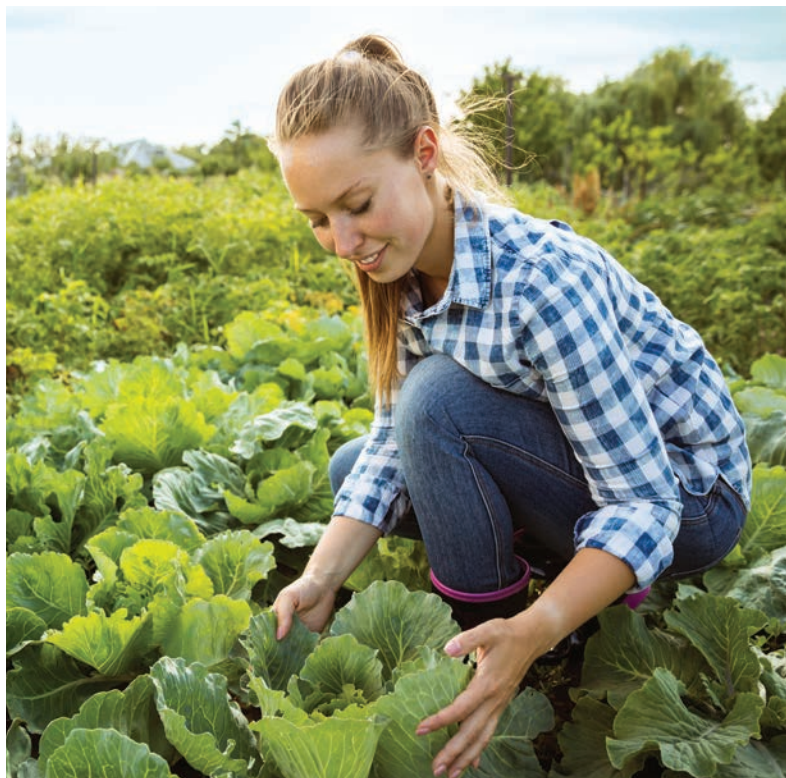
Applicants may include individuals, legal entities, joint operations, Indian tribes or Alaska Native organizations that own, rent or manage land for agricultural production and are currently engaged in agricultural production. The applicant must have a social security

number or employer identification number issued by the IRS; and must maintain control of the land for the entire span of the 5-year CSP contract. The applicant must have an adjusted gross income of less than \$900,000. The income requirement does not apply to Native American tribes and Alaska Native entities.

STEWARDSHIP THRESHOLD ELIGIBILITY

What is the stewardship threshold?

Stewardship threshold is a term NRCS uses to determine if a CSP applicant is currently meeting or exceeding an adequate level of conservation criteria for a particular natural resource concern. CSP applicants must currently be meeting the stewardship threshold for at least two priority natural resource concerns on every land use included in the operation. They must also agree to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for at least one additional priority resource concern by the end of the contract on at least one land use. Don't worry if you are unsure of your threshold, your NRCS planner will help you find that out.



RESOURCE CONCERNS

What is a Resource Concern?

A resource concern is a problem that NRCS identifies on the land that negatively impacts the sustainability or intended use of soil, water, air, plants, animals or energy. NRCS defines the minimum acceptable levels for each resource concern in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide, Section 3. If the condition of a natural resource is below the NRCS minimum acceptable levels, then it is considered a resource concern.

How many resource concerns do I need to meet at the time of application?

Two on every land use included in your operation. An NRCS conservation planner must be able to document that you are currently managing and implementing conservation activities to sufficiently improve two of the below resource concerns on the land. You will also pick a third resource concern to address through CSP.

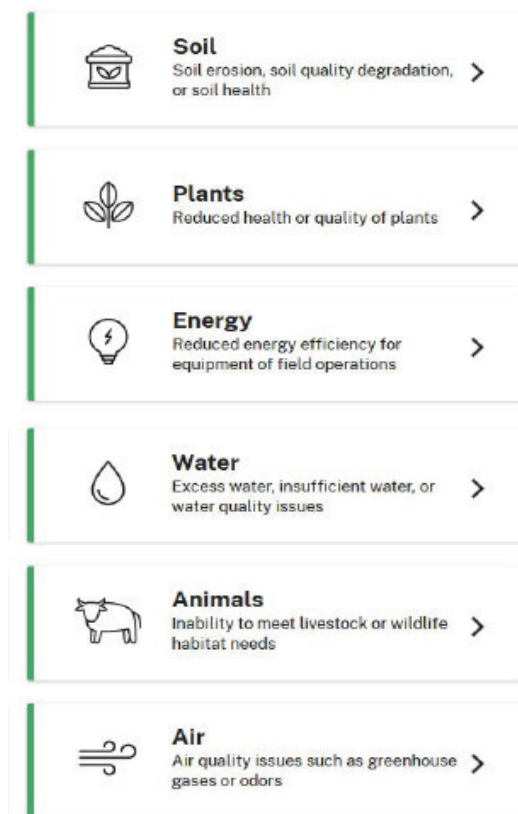
National CSP Resource Concerns

NRCS conservation planners will evaluate the following resource concerns as part of your CSP application:

1. Air Quality Emissions
2. Degraded Plant Condition
3. Fire Management
4. Pest Pressure
5. Inefficient Energy Use
6. Livestock Production Limitation
7. Aquatic Habitat
8. Field Pesticide Loss
9. Field, Sediment, Nutrient and Pathogen Loss
10. Salt Losses to Water
11. Storage and Handling of Pollutants
12. Soil Quality Limitation
13. Source Water Depletion
14. Terrestrial Habitat
15. Weather Resilience
16. Concentrated Erosion
17. Wind and Water Erosion

How can I learn about different resource concerns that might affect my operation?

Check out the “Conservation Concerns Tool” on Farmers.gov to learn about different types of conservation issues that might impact the productivity or natural resources on your farm, ranch, or forest. This user-friendly, simple online tool gives you the option to build a list of concerns to discuss with your local NRCS conservation planner.



Scan the code with a QR reader app on your phone or visit the Conservation Concerns tool online at:

www.farmers.gov/conserve/tool



CSP offers additional opportunities to expand on your existing conservation efforts by applying conservation practices, enhancements and bundles.

The practices or enhancements you choose from are designed to improve the condition of the natural resource concern on your operation.

PRACTICES, ENHANCEMENTS & BUNDLES

What is a conservation practice?

A conservation practice is an action that you willingly apply to your operation with guidance from NRCS. Conservation practices can improve soil, water, plants, air, wildlife habitat, and related natural resources. For example, 'forest stand improvement' is a commonly used conservation practice in Alaska in which dense, overstocked forests are thinned to allow for improved tree health and habitat, and reduced wildfire risk. Each conservation practice must be performed using NRCS practice standards developed by each state.

What is an enhancement?

Through CSP, producers have the opportunity to further improve their conservation efforts with

conservation activities called "enhancements." Enhancements allow a producer to address additional levels of conservation beyond what the minimum conservation practice standard requires. CSP applicants work one-on-one with their NRCS conservation planner to select enhancements that best fit their management goals and that will address resource concerns on the enrolled operation.

What is a bundle?

CSP applicants who want to increase their conservation stewardship even further may consider "bundles" of enhancement activities. Some enhancements work together to provide increased conservation benefits when they are implemented as a group. Producers may consider adopting these enhancement groups or "bundles" on their operation.

Each bundle has three or more required enhancements, and for some bundles, the applicant has

the option to pick additional enhancements from a select list that addresses specific resource concerns.

Bundles have enhancements grouped according to land use – crop, pasture, range and forest, as well as agency initiatives such as Working Lands for Wildlife. Bundles receive a higher level of financial assistance to encourage the holistic approach to generate additional conservation benefits.

Producers interested in implementing enhancements or bundles on their property can visit with their local NRCS conservation planner to learn more about them.

CSP PAYMENTS

What types of payments are offered through CSP?

Contract payments are based on two components:

1. Payments to maintain the existing level of conservation based on the land uses included in the contract and NRCS assessment of existing stewardship at the time of enrollment;
2. Payments to implement additional conservation activities.

When are payments made?

Payments are made soon as practical after October 1 of each fiscal year for contract activities installed and maintained in the previous year.

Is there a minimum annual payment?

Yes. A minimum annual payment of \$1,500 applies to all CSP contracts.

Do I have to pay income taxes on my payments?

Yes. All payments made to you by NRCS are reported to the Internal Revenue Service and should be reported as income on your tax return for the applicable tax year. You will receive a Form 1099 to report CSP payments on your tax return.

CSP APPLICATION & EVALUATION

How do I apply for CSP?

Contact your local NRCS field office and let them know you are interested in CSP. A conservation planner will work with you to determine your stewardship threshold eligibility.

If you are new to working with USDA, you will need to establish your Farm Record with the Farm Service Agency. Establishing a Farm Record requires several forms and documents, so make an appointment with your FSA office as soon as possible.

In addition to your Farm Record documents, you will also need to submit to NRCS:

- CPA-1200 - Conservation Program Application
- Map showing all eligible land uses and acres in the operation, and identify any ineligible land in the operation.

How are CSP applications evaluated?

Once NRCS completes an assessment of your operation and you choose the conservation activities you will implement, NRCS will rank your application to determine how well your current and future management system will address national, state, and local natural resource priorities.

NRCS will rank your application against other eligible applications that have similar resource challenges in the same local ranking pool, with the highest scoring applications receiving contract offers first.





If you enroll in CSP, you will be required to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for one resource concern on at least one of the land uses on your property.

You will have 5 years to complete the work. Here are some examples of the types of enhancements and practices used through CSP in Alaska to address various resource concerns.

CSP EXAMPLES

NON-INDUSTRIAL PRIVATE FORESTLAND

Resource Concerns: Degraded Plant Condition, Terrestrial Habitat, Aquatic Habitat, Wind and Water Erosion

CSP Enhancements and Practices Applied:

- 384 - Woody Residue Treatment
- 612 - Tree/Shrub Establishment
- 654 - Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment
- 666 - Forest Stand Improvement
- E420A - Establish pollinator habitat
- E580B - Stream corridor bank vegetation improvement
- E395A - Stream habitat improvement through placement of woody biomass

AGRICULTURAL LAND

Resource Concerns: Degraded Plant Condition, Livestock Production Limitation

CSP Enhancements and Practices Applied:

- 340 - Cover Crop
- 328 - Conservation Crop Rotation
- E512G - Native grasses or legumes in forage base
- E528F - Stockpiling cool season forage to improve structure and composition or plant productivity and health

Resource Concerns: Degraded Plant Condition, Soil Quality Limitation, Wind and Water Erosion, Terrestrial Habitat

CSP Enhancements and Practices Applied:

- 649 - Structures for Wildlife

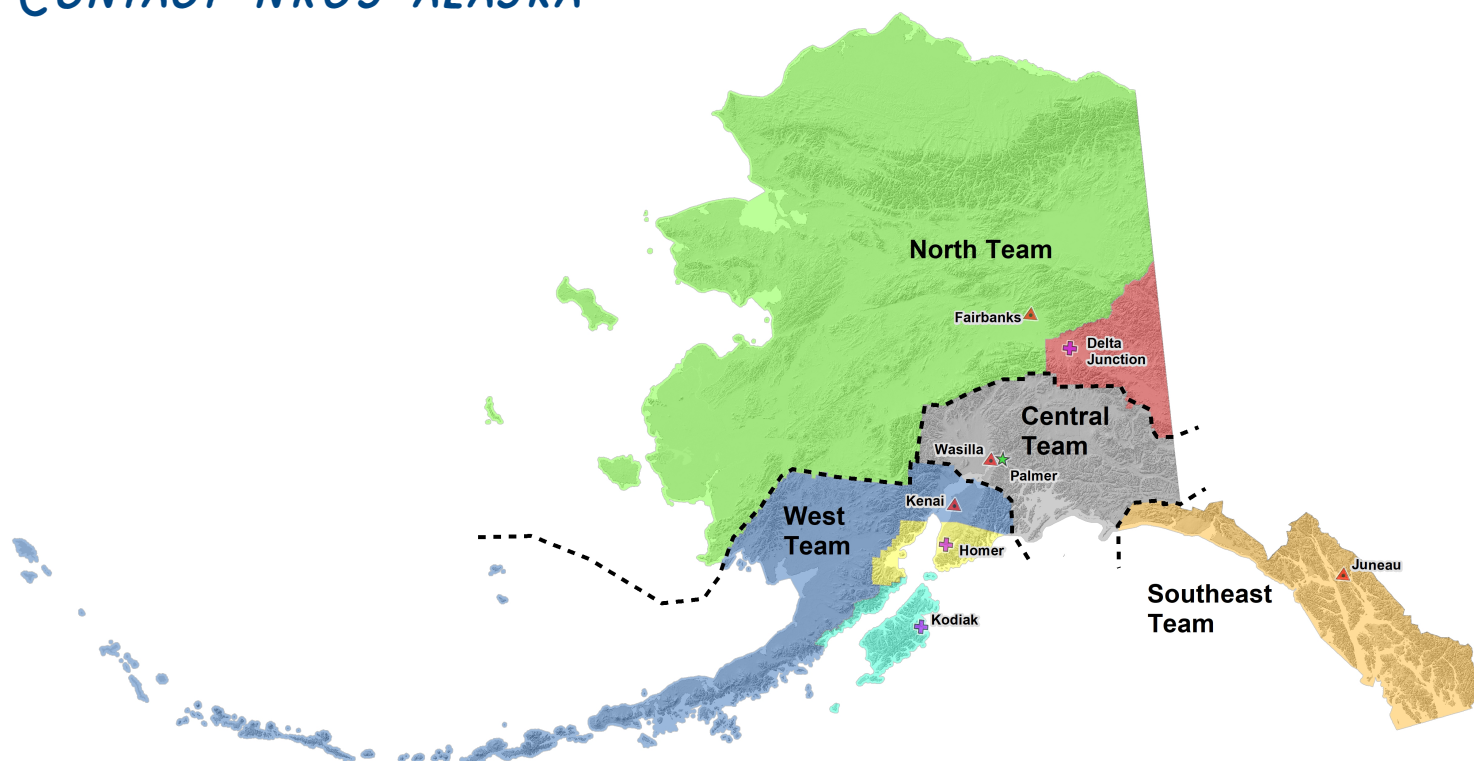
- 603 - Herbaceous Wind Barriers
- E340A - Cover crop to reduce soil erosion
- E484A - Mulching to improve soil health
- E328F - Modifications to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter
- E327A - Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects

Resource Concerns: Soil Quality Limitation

CSP Enhancements and Practices Applied:

- 340 - Cover Crop
- E340E - Use of soil health assessment to assist with development of cover crop mix to improve soil health
- E328A - Resource Conserving Crop Rotation or E328E Soil health crop rotation

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