



THINKING ABOUT
WORKING
WITH NRCS?

Here's what you need to know.

So you're ready to make some improvements on your land but not sure where to start? The **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service** may be able to help. NRCS works with farmers, ranchers, tribes and other individuals interested in conserving the soil, water and other natural resources on their land.

We can help you identify natural resource concerns and develop a conservation plan to address those issues on your property. Funding is available to help you offset the costs to implement the actions identified in your conservation plan.

Still Interested? That's great! Below are a few things to think about before applying to NRCS for financial assistance programs.

Can you answer YES to the following questions?

If so, then you may be eligible to participate in NRCS financial assistance programs.

- | | YES | NO | | YES | NO |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Do you have a social security number or employer identification number issued by the IRS? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 5. Is your land in agriculture, such as cropland, rangeland, grassland, pasture or non-industrial private forest land? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Will you maintain control of your land for the entire span of the proposed NRCS contract? Land control/ownership can be documented as a deed, lease, or another form of evidence. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 6. Is your land in compliance with Highly Erodible Land and wetland conservation provisions? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Is your adjusted gross income less than \$900,000? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 7. If the work you want to do with NRCS involves water, can you prove your water right (or willing to apply for water rights)? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. If you're an entity, do you have signature authority to make management decisions on the land? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 8. Do you have an interest in the agricultural or forestry operation on your land? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

If you're not sure how to answer any of these questions, check with your local USDA Service Center.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

It's a contract.

It's important to understand that to receive financial payments from NRCS, you are entering into a contract with the U.S. government. That means you agree to complete certain conservation activities on your land within a set time frame to earn financial incentives. NRCS understands that things can happen outside of your control that result in delays, such as a natural disaster; so we may be able to modify the contract if needed. But keep in mind that if contract conditions aren't met, you may be liable for paying back all or a portion of the funding, or your contract may be terminated.

You pay the costs up-front.

NRCS contracts work kind of like a mail-in rebate. Typically, you pay the costs up-front for conservation practices, then NRCS issues you a payment after completion. Therefore, it's important to consider your out-of-pocket costs up-front and determine if the proposed project makes financial sense for your operation. Advance payments are an option that can minimize your up-front costs if you qualify as a historically underserved producer. Ask your local NRCS office about advance payments if that sounds like a better fit for you.

Work must take place during the specified contract timeline.

This means you'll need to wait to begin working on a conservation practice until your contract is signed. You must have at least one conservation practice commenced during the first year of your contract. NRCS will help you in the planning process to figure out the best schedule for your operation, but keep in mind that the contract will require certain practices to be completed within a specified time frame.

Projects must meet NRCS design standards.

Because we want to ensure the conservation projects on your land will perform as intended, NRCS has developed science-based conservation standards for each of the conservation practices. That means when you implement projects on your land, they need to meet NRCS technical specifications. Activities that fall short of these standards will not receive payment and may need to be removed or replaced.

NRCS must certify the completed work before issuing your payment.

Before NRCS can issue your payment, NRCS staff will need to visit your land to certify that the conservation practices have been completed according to our conservation standards. Once NRCS certifies a practice, you will receive payment via direct deposit.

NRCS payments vary depending on the type of conservation practice.

Interested in how much you may get paid for various conservation practices? NRCS has set payment schedules that determine the payment amount. Check with your local NRCS office to find out more about payment schedules.

You are responsible for paying income tax on any NRCS payments.

By law, you must report any payments you receive from NRCS as taxable income when filing your annual income tax return. You may need to consider how this will impact your tax returns.

You'll be asked to provide your personal information, but it's kept strictly confidential.

NRCS financial assistance programs require you to provide personal, financial, or sensitive information to process your applications, contracts and payments. This information is kept confidential and is protected by USDA.

We realize this is a lot of information to process, and we're here to help. Contact your local NRCS field office to get started. We are looking forward to working with you!

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