|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **News Release**    **For Immediate Release**  **January 9, 2023**    **For more information, contact: Laura T. Anderson, State Public Affairs Specialist,** [**publicaffairs-ms@usda.gov**](mailto:publicaffairs-ms@usda.gov) | | |  | | --- | |  | | |
| **NRCS Announces Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) FY2023 Signup**  **Jackson, Miss., January 9, 2023**– The next deadline for Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications to be considered for funding in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 is **Februar**y**9, 2023**. Through CSP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners earn payments for expanding conservation activities while maintaining agricultural production on their land. CSP also encourages the adoption of new technologies and management techniques.  "CSP continues to be a very effective tool for agricultural producers working to enhance their conservation and management goals," said Kurt Readus, NRCS State Conservationist in Mississippi. "It is the largest conservation program in the United States with more than 70 million acres of productive agricultural and forest land enrolled in CSP."  While applications are accepted throughout the year, interested producers should submit applications to their local NRCS office by February 9, 2023, to ensure their applications are considered for FY 2023 funding.  **Changes to the Program**  The 2018 Farm Bill authorizes the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) to accept new CSP enrollments from now until 2023, making some important improvements to the program. These updates include:   * NRCS currently enrolls eligible, high-ranking applications based on dollars rather than acres. * Higher payment rates are now available for certain conservation activities, including cover crops and resource-conserving crop rotations. * CSP now provides specific support for organic and transitioning to organic production activities and a special grassland conservation initiative for certain producers who have maintained cropland base acres. * NRCS recently made several updates to the program to help producers better evaluate their conservation options and the benefits to their operations and natural resources. New methods and software for evaluating applications help producers see up front why they are or are not meeting stewardship thresholds and allow them to pick practices and enhancements that match their conservation objectives. These tools also enable producers to see potential payment scenarios for conservation early in the process.   **About the Program**  CSP is offered in Mississippi through continuous sign-ups. The program provides many benefits, including increased crop yields, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements, and increased resilience to weather extremes. CSP is for working lands, including cropland, pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land, and agricultural land, under the jurisdiction of a tribe.  Online services are available to customers with an e-Authentication (e-Auth) account, which provides access to the [farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov/) portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and payments and view and track certain USDA program applications and payments. An e-Auth account is a way for you to interact with USDA websites online. It gives you the ability to identify yourself to the USDA via your User ID and password. It also allows you to access many USDA applications across the many USDA agencies and their services. Customers who do not already have an e-Auth account can enroll at [farmers.gov/account](https://www.farmers.gov/account).  For additional information about CSP, landowners should contact their county's local NRCS office at the [USDA Service Center](https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/USDA-service-centers). For more information, visit [our website](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/mississippi).  USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDQsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMjAxMDQuNTEyMzU3NDEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5hc2NyLnVzZGEuZ292L2hvdy1maWxlLXByb2dyYW0tZGlzY3JpbWluYXRpb24tY29tcGxhaW50P3V0bV9tZWRpdW09ZW1haWwmdXRtX3NvdXJjZT1nb3ZkZWxpdmVyeSJ9.JJPmGHvQ0UDXIZ2_AiKANh13buKJC1JFa-BcDSBxDVI/s/1039067588/br/124112385624-l) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). |