

# Conservation Stewardship Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service



## Overview

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional activities to address priority resource concerns.

CSP pays participants for conservation performance – the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

The 2018 Farm Bill increases payment rates for adoption of cover crop rotations and advanced grazing management activities. It also extends contracts to facilitate renewal under new program authority. Participants can renew their contracts for five more years through a competitive process.

## Benefits

Every piece of property is unique with opportunities to improve natural resources and address areas of concern such as soil health, erosion, water quality and quantity, air quality and plant and animal resources as well as energy.

Through CSP, we can help you build your business while implementing conservation activities that help ensure the sustainability of your entire operation. These improvements work naturally with your land to bring out its best potential.

## How It Works

CSP is available for private, public and tribal agricultural, crop, grass, pasture and nonindustrial private forest land. The program offers various types of payments through five-year contracts.

Options include:

- Supplemental payments for advanced grazing management and one-time payments to develop comprehensive conservation plans
- Existing Activity Payments (EAPs) made annually to maintain conservation activities and resource concerns met at the time of application
- New activities payments for practices, enhancements or bundles (Bundles now include both enhancements and practices.)
- A \$1,500 annual minimum payment for small producers who don't have a lot of land to enroll

Your local district conservationist will consult with you to evaluate your current management system and present CSP enhancement alternatives for you to consider implementing on your land.

The variety of available CSP practices gives you a lot of freedom to select enhancements that help you meet your management goals. The program also provides specific support for organic and transitioning to organic production activities.

Popular options for Virginia **livestock** producers include forage and biomass planting, prescribed grazing, herbaceous weed treatment and nutrient management.

**Crop** operations often choose cover crop and reduced tillage/no-till or enhanced nutrient management practices. Virginia **forest** landowners regularly opt for tree/shrub planting or forest stand improvement.



## How Well Do You Know CSP?

### Common Misconceptions

Participants are required to schedule enhancements by the third year of the contract.

Annual payments are limited to \$40,000.

You don't have to enroll land you don't have control of in future years.

Participants must comply with strict time limits for commencing the first activity. CSP offers early start waivers and 12 months to commence.

### How it Really Works

Participants can be owners, operators or tenants (no operator of record waivers are required).

Higher payments are available for cover crops (125 percent).

Eligibility has been expanded to include public land.

The \$400,000 contract limit has been increased for all joint operations.

## Who is Eligible?

CSP is available to all producers, regardless of operation size or type of crops produced. Applicants may include individuals, legal entities, joint operations or Indian tribes meeting the stewardship threshold for at least two priority resource concerns when they apply.

Producers must be owners, operators or tenants with effective control of the land for the term of the proposed contract.

Fund pools are available for beginning farmers and socially disadvantaged participants. Producers with active EQIP contracts are still eligible to enroll in CSP.

## New CSP Grasslands Conservation Initiative

GLCI assists producers in protecting grazing uses; conserving and improving soil, water and wildlife resources; and achieving related conservation benefits by safeguarding eligible land through grassland conservation contracts.

## How GLCI Works

By providing financial assistance to conserve grasslands through a single opportunity to enroll in a five-year contract.

Eligible lands are limited to cropland for which base acres have been maintained under FSA's Agriculture Risk Coverage



*Your local NRCS team will meet with you to discuss opportunities available through the 2018 Farm Bill to take your land management to the next level with CSP.*

(ARC)/Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and were planted in grass or pasture, including idle or fallow, during a specific period.

Enrolled acreage must be managed consistently with a grassland conservation plan.

## Who is Eligible?

Applicants may include individuals, legal entities, joint operations or Indian tribes meeting the stewardship threshold for one priority resource concern when they apply.

Producers must be owners, operators or tenants with effective control of the land for the term of the proposed contract. They must also share in the risk and daily operation management and be in compliance with Highly

Erodible Lands (HEL)/Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions for participation in Farm Bill programs.

## How to Apply

NRCS accepts applications throughout the year. Visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](http://farmers.gov/service-locator) to find your local USDA Service Center.

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

## More Information

For more information, visit [nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill](http://nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill) or [farmers.gov](http://farmers.gov).

