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USDA, NRCS Extends Application Period for the Conservation Stewardship Program until March 13, 2015

Jackson, Miss., Feb. 26, 2015 –The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has extended the application deadline sign-up for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) general sign-up until March 13, 2015. Applications are taken on a continuous basis but applications received by this date will be ranked and considered for funding in FY 2015.

“CSP is a way of incentivizing our producers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship,” said State Conservationist Kurt Readus, NRCS State Conservationist in Mississippi. “By focusing on multiple resource concerns, landowners can achieve a sustainable landscape and maintain or increase the productivity of their operations.”

Through CSP, participants take additional conservation steps to improve the resource conditions on their land, including soil, air and habitat quality, water quality and quantity, and energy conservation. Several new activities are offered in FY 2015 to address resource concerns, including many new forestry activities.

CSP will also help broaden the impacts of NRCS’ Landscape Conservation Initiatives through a new pilot effort, which accelerates private lands conservation activities to address particular goals, such as creating habitat for at-risk species and conserving and cleaning water. The landscape initiative offered in Mississippi is the Longleaf Pine Initiative.

Applications should be submitted to the local NRCS offices by close of business on March 13, 2015 for ranking and funding consideration for FY 2015. As part of the CSP application process, applicants will work with NRCS field personnel to complete a resource inventory of their land, which will help determine the conservation performance for existing and new conservation activities. The applicant's conservation performance will be used to determine eligibility, ranking, and payments.

USDA offers financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers or forest landowners for the active management and maintenance of existing conservation activities and for carrying out new conservation activities on working agricultural land. Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, non-industrial private forestland and tribal agricultural land. Applicants must have control of the land for the 5-year term of the contract.

To learn more about CSP or our other programs, visit your local NRCS office or go to our website at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/ms/home/>. You can locate the NRCS office in your county by visiting <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

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