

United States Department of Agriculture



NEWS RELEASE

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Funding Available for Conservation-Minded Producers

Signup Deadline is January 13, 2012

HARRISBURG, Dec. 22, 2011 - Ag producers and non-industrial forestland owners may be eligible to receive payments to maintain high levels of conservation on their land and adopt higher levels of stewardship through USDA's Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). But, they must act soon; the application deadline is January 13, 2012.

CSP is offered through continuous sign-ups with announced cut-off dates for ranking periods. CSP offers producers, nationwide, over 81 choices of enhancements and 37 practices. A participant may choose bundles of enhancements that when implemented together will highly benefit natural resources by improving water and soil quality, enhancing wildlife habitat, and addressing the effects of climate change and alternative energy. A list of activities is available at www.nrcs.usda.gov, under Programs and Services, Stewardship Programs, Conservation Stewardship Program.

Land types eligible for CSP include cropland, such as hay land, orchards, vineyards, and vegetables; pastureland, including all grazing lands, and non-industrial private forestland of any size as long as the area supports trees or is capable of supporting trees and can be managed as a forestland unit.

As part of the application process, an interview will be held with the applicant at the local NRCS field office to answer conservation questions about their farm or forestland in a Conservation Management Tool (CMT) and choose enhancements and/or practices to implement more conservation. The CMT assigns points to each question answered, which vary from farm to farm. In 2011, the average payment for cropland/pastureland was between \$18-\$55 per acre/year for 5 years and forestland averaged \$7-14/acre/year for 5 years.

A CSP self-screening checklist is available to help producers determine if they are eligible for CSP and if CSP is suitable for their operation. The checklist highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, contract obligations and potential payments. Applications are available from local USDA NRCS Service Centers or online at: <http://www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CSP/index.html>.

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