



**Natural Resources
Conservation Service**

607 9th ST NE
Long Prairie, MN 56347
Voice: 320.732.6618 ext. 3
Email: russell.kleinschmidt@mn.usda.gov
Web: www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

News Release

Contact: Russell Kleinschmidt

Phone: 320-732-6618 ext. 3

USDA Accepting Applications for Conservation Stewardship Program *\$100 million Expected to Attract Enrollment of 7.7 Million Acres for Conservation*

Long Prairie, MINN, Jan. 27, 2015 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture will make available \$100 million this year through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and although applications are accepted all year, farmers, ranchers and forest landowners should submit applications by Feb. 27, 2015 to ensure they are considered for this year's funding (applications received after that date will be considered for future funding). This year's investment may result in the enrollment of up to 7.7 million acres in the program by private landowners.

“CSP is a way of incentivizing farmers, ranchers, and private forest managers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship,” said District Conservationist Russell Kleinschmidt of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. “By focusing on multiple resource concerns, landowners are able to 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.

Kleinschmidt said CSP producers are conservation leaders, showing how science-based conservation and technological advancements can improve the environment and farming operations at the same time.

The 2014 Farm Bill brought changes to CSP including an expanded conservation activity list that will offer participants greater options to meet their conservation needs and protect the natural resources on their land. These conservation activities, called enhancements, include cover crops, intensive rotational grazing and wildlife friendly fencing.

Applications should be submitted to local NRCS offices. 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.

A CSP self-screening checklist is available to help producers determine if the program is suitable for their operation. The checklist highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, stewardship threshold requirements and payment types.

For more on technical and financial assistance available through conservation programs, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted or your local USDA service center office at 607 9th ST NE Long Prairie, MN.

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