

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

and

CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM

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This presentation will cover basic information about the Conservation Stewardship Program and the Conservation Security Program in Missouri.

Conservation Stewardship Program

Encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by

- Installing and adopting additional conservation activities
- Improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities

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The Stewardship Program encourages applicants to improve conservation by installing and adopting new conservation activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities on agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land. It is available nationwide on a continuous application basis.

Conservation Stewardship Program

- Abbreviated as CStP or CSP
- First signup held in FY09
- Continuous signup with periodic national cut-offs for ranking
- Signup dates, ranking and contracting deadlines set by NHQ

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The Stewardship Program's first signup period was held in 2009. Dates and deadlines for signups and payments are established by National Headquarters and generally announced in National Bulletins.

Each funding pool established priority resource concerns by the State Conservationist with input from the State Technical Committee and local work groups. The resource concerns will focus program impacts on natural resources that are of specific concern for a State, or the specific geographic areas within a State.

Applications will be evaluated relative to other applications addressing similar priority resource concerns to facilitate a competitive ranking process among applicants within a State who face similar resource challenges.

Applicant/Participant and Land Eligibility

- Must meet eligibility criteria
 - Must be operator in FSA farm records management system
 - Agricultural operation includes all land operated substantially separate where the operator has control for the contract term of 5 years.
 - Must meet one resource concern at the time of application (measured by Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT))

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Applicants must:

- ✓ Be the operator of record in the USDA farm records management system for the eligible land being offered for enrollment;
- ✓ Have effective control of the land for the term of the proposed contract
- ✓ Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provision of 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 12 and adjusted gross income provisions of 7 CFR part 1400.
- ✓ Include the eligible land in their entire agricultural or forestry operation.

Contracts must have a participant that also meets these requirements.

Conservation Stewardship Program

- Separate applications and contracts for Nonindustrial Private Forest Land (NIPF) and AgLand (Cropland and Pastureland)
- Applications are ranked using a national Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT) score

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The conservation measurement tool (CMT) is used to evaluate all CStP applications.

The CMT considers the relative conservation physical effects of conservation activities on natural resource concerns to estimate the existing conservation performance levels and the additional conservation performance improvement proposed by an applicant.

Applications that are developed into contracts must maintain the level of conservation agreed to in the contract – both existing and planned conservation as detailed in the Stewardship Plan and in the CMT.

For more information, see the CStP portion of 440 Programs on eDirectives

Conservation Stewardship Program Contracts

- CMT determines land eligibility and documents existing level of conservation and also planned enhancements and practices
- Stewardship Plan supports the CMT with a detailed schedule of planned enhancements and practices by year.
 - Stewardship Plan is a part of the contract document

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Conservation Stewardship Plan

The conservation stewardship plan contains a record of the participant's decisions and includes the schedule of new conservation activities to be installed to achieve additional conservation performance identified in the contract. The conservation stewardship plan documents the basis for payment for the new conservation activities that are set forth in the Conservation Plan Schedule of Operations (Form NRCS-CPA-1155). The existing conservation activities to be improved, maintained, and managed are contained in the conservation performance summary and detail reports in CMT and these reports are considered part of the conservation stewardship plan even though they are not in Toolkit.

Conservation Stewardship Program Contracts

- All contracts are 5 years in length
- Violation of the contractual agreement, (such as voluntary loss of control of land) may result in contract termination.
- Participants agree to maintain the level of conservation established in the CMT at contract obligation (CMT data)

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The **Conservation Stewardship Program** (CStP) presents a significant shift in how NRCS provides conservation program payments. CStP participants will receive an annual land use payment for operation-level environmental benefits they produce. Under CStP, participants are paid for conservation performance: the higher the operational performance, the higher their payment. Performance is measured by the Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT), which is accessed through ProTracts.

Conservation Security Program

Now let's talk about the Conservation Security Program.

Conservation Security Program

- Abbreviated as CSP
- Signups held 2004 – 2008 in selected watersheds
- A participant can only be on one contract, which would include their entire Ag Operation
- Contracts are 5-10 years in length

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The Security Program is still active in Missouri and will be until 2017. The program was only offered in select watersheds between 2004 and 2008. Contracts are from 5 – 10 years in length.

Payments



Stewardship and Security Payments

- Security: Payments are made in advance of the work being completed by the participant.
- Stewardship: Payments are made in arrears of the work being completed by the participant.

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Stewardship and Security contracts both make payments annually, as directed by National Headquarters. The timeline and deadline for payments are announced in a separate National Bulletin for each program each fiscal year.

Stewardship and Security Payments

- Funds obligated at contract obligation are only for the first annual payment
- Annually, each contract must complete a 3 step process in ProTracts to obligate the funds.
 - Promote
 - 2nd Level Review
 - Obligate

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Obligations for payments are made annually. Only the first annual payment is obligated when the contract is executed. Each year thereafter, the funds must be obligated through ProTracts prior to the annual payment being made.

There is a 3 step process in ProTracts to obligate funds for the annual payment: Promote, 2nd Level Review, and Obligate.

Stewardship and Security Payments

- Stewardship contract must obligate funds after making the annual payment to prepare for the next year's payment.
- Security contracts must obligate funds each year before making the annual payment; the payment is obligated in the same fiscal year it is paid.

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The two programs complete the annual obligation in a different order:

Stewardship:

- Complete annual payment
- Promote next year's obligation
- 2nd Level review for next year's obligation
- Obligate next year's obligation

Security:

- Promote the current year's obligation
- 2nd Level Review for current year obligation
- Obligate current year obligation
- Complete annual payment

Stewardship and Security Payments

- Payments are made annually
- Participants are typically given a choice of when to receive payment, as long as payments are completed prior to the deadline established by NHQ in a National Bulletin

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NRCS will make fiscal year contract payments as soon as practicable after October 1 of each fiscal year.

Stewardship and Security

- Contracts must have an annual review completed by NRCS and documented in ProTracts
- Participants are required to maintain records of program activity as specified in the contract's appendix (usually 3 yr).

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Payments will not be made until the activities are certified and approved for payment unless the participant and NRCS have a signed Form NRCS-CPA-153, "Agreement Covering Non Compliance with Provision of the Contract".

A performance level below what is required in the contract will be considered a potential contract violation. Potential contract violations are to be addressed with a formal contract review.

Form NRCS-CPA-153 will be executed to document the potential violation and all actions needed to bring the contract back into compliance. The NRCS-CPA-153 will be completed simultaneously with the NRCS-CPA-13. This document will be kept in the participant's case file. If the participant cannot complete the agreement within the timeframe specified in Form NRCS-CPA-153, the contract will be considered in noncompliance and handled in accordance with procedures in 440CPM, Part 512, Section 512.57.

Resources

eDirectives

- Manuals: Title 440 Programs under “Manuals” on eDirectives
 - Part 508 Conservation Stewardship Program
 - Part 512 Conservation Program Contracting
 - Part 518 Conservation Stewardship Program
- National Bulletins: Title 300 and Title 440 under “National Bulletins” in eDirectives
 - Annual Payments and Review Requirements
 - Other Updates, Requirements

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The link to eDirectives is: <http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/default.aspx>

It is important when working with programs to know and utilize the Conservation Programs Manual and National Bulletins to administer each program correctly.

Resources

SharePoint

- Missouri:

<https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/central/mo/programs/default.aspx>

- NHQ:

<https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/programs/allcsp/default.aspx?RootFolder=%2fprograms%2fallcsp%2fConservation%20Stewardship%20Program%2f2013%20Ranking%20Period%2fActivity%20Lists&FolderCTID=&View=%7bB1422E78%2dEEF2%2d42ED%2dA885%2dD2AB475C608D%7d>

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Missouri: <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/central/mo/programs/default.aspx>

NHQ: <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/programs/allcsp/default.aspx?RootFolder=%2fprograms%2fallcsp%2fConservation%20Stewardship%20Program%2f2013%20Ranking%20Period%2fActivity%20Lists&FolderCTID=&View=%7bB1422E78%2dEEF2%2d42ED%2dA885%2dD2AB475C608D%7d>

There are additional resources available on line.

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