



Application Process for North Carolina Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)



Participant's Responsibilities

Completing an CSP Application Form

- Ensure you answer every application question and read all the information before signing it.
- Applications can be received by e-mail, mail, fax, in person, through farmers.gov, and also by telephone.
- The participant must ensure NRCS has received the application if it is not hand-delivered.

Applications are accepted on a continuous basis, however North Carolina's application deadlines are usually after the new Fiscal Year begins on October 1st.

Eligibility

If participant does not have records established with USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA), please contact your local FSA office to start the process before submitting your application.

If the participant already has records established with FSA, some forms may need to be updated annually:

- Form AD-1026: Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification
- Form CCC-941: Average Adjusted Gross Income Certification and Consent to Disclosure of Tax Information
- Forms CCC-902I and/or 902E: Farm Operating Plan for an Individual or Entity

A Forest Management Plan or a Regeneration Plan written by a Certified Forester will be needed for forestry applications.

Eligibility Deadline

- If you haven't updated your eligibility with FSA, you will receive notification from NRCS stating that you must complete eligibility with FSA by a set deadline.
- Failing to update eligibility by the deadline will result in not being considered for funding during the batching cycle.

Control of Land

- You must include all the land you have control of for the next 5 years and indicate the fields that you have control of.

NRCS's Responsibilities

NRCS received a complete application

The NRCS staff will date stamp and add the application in the system, and start building a case file. Also, NRCS will check the FSA eligibility status of your application.

NRCS & Participant Responsibilities

Complete Assessment

- NRCS should complete the resource concern assessment with the participant for each land use (cropland, pastureland, forestry, farmstead, etc.) on the farm.

Select CSP Enhancements/Practices

- NRCS and the participant should work together in selecting the enhancements or conservation practices that best suit the agricultural operations.
- Some enhancements have State Supplements with additional requirements from the national enhancement.

Stewardship Threshold Eligibility

- A Stewardship Threshold eligibility report will be created to determine if each land use meet the minimum requirements of two priority natural resource concerns at the time of the application AND if meet or exceed additional resource concern by the end of the contract.
- If the land does not meet the minimum stewardship threshold, the participant will become ineligible. The participant should work on addressing the resource concerns and apply again in the future.

NRCS's Responsibilities

Field Verification

- To ensure the condition of the site matches with the assessment.
- To conduct field assessments such as the In-Field Soil Health Assessment, Pasture Condition Scoresheet, or visual inspections of the land to answer questions for the resource concern assessment.
- To ensure the participant is in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions.

Conservation Plan

- A Conservation plan will be developed with the enhancements or conservation practices you agreed to implement with the help of a CSP contract.



Ranking

- NRCS will rank your application against other similar eligible applications in the same ranking pool.

Selection

- Selection is made based on the applications with the highest scores and how much funds have been allocated to a specific “ CSP fund pool.”
- If not selected for funding, your application stays in the system until more funding becomes available, if more funding doesn’t become available, your application will be reevaluated the following Fiscal Year.

Participant’s Responsibilities

Contract

- Request NRCS to go over the contract with you before signing a contract and ask every question that come to mind.
- Ensure you read the contract appendix!
- You can decide whether or not to proceed with a contract. There is no penalty for **canceling an application** if the contract is not yet signed.
- **Canceling a contract** could lead to liquidated damages in an amount equal to 10 percent of the total financial assistance obligated to the participant in the contract.
- Ensure you understand the unit cost for each conservation practice that you have in the contract.
- Understand *planned/contracted amount vs. implemented amount*.

Implement Enhancements/Practice

- Implementation of an enhancement or conservation practice within 12 months of starting the contract.
- Enhancements or conservation practices have to meet NRCS standards and specifications.
- Contact NRCS staff once you installed the enhancement or conservation practice.

NRCS’s Responsibilities

Reimbursement

- NRCS will evaluate/certified for payment as long as the conservation practice meets NRCS standards and specification. **NRCS makes payments after October 1 of each fiscal year.**
- Make sure your banking information is correct for reimbursement. Contact NRCS of any changes.

Where are you in the process?

Done	Date	Actions
		Participant completed an application
		Participant met eligibility deadline
		NRCS & Participant completed the resource concerns assessment
		NRCS & Participant selected enhancements/conservation practices
		Met Stewardship threshold
		NRCS created a Conservation Plan
		NRCS completed ranking
		NRCS made a selection
		Participant signed a CSP contract
		Participant implemented the enhancements/conservation practices
		NRCS inspected the enhancement/conservation practice implemented
		NRCS will make payments after October 1st of each year
		Contract completed after year 5
Come back and see us again!		

Things to Do!

- Update eligibility with USDA-FSA!
- Ensure you fully understand the Conservation Plan and Implementation Requirements.
- If you are installing a conservation practice on **rented land**, the landowner must sign an “Agreement to Allow Installation of Conservation Practices” form.

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