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NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Issues Final Rule for Conservation Stewardship Program

Sign-up extended to June 25th.

Jackson, MS, June 7, 2010 - USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has published the final regulations governing the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, CSP is a voluntary program that offers payments to producers who exercise good land stewardship and want to improve their conservation performance. Changes to the program expand access, increase payment limits, and promote greater environmental benefit while maintaining program goals.

The current enrollment period for CSP has been extended an additional two weeks, now closing **June 25, 2010**, when applications will be scored, ranked, and funded.

CSP pays participants for conservation performance – the higher the performance, the higher the payment. Producers get credit both for conservation measures they have already implemented and for new measures they agree to add. CSP is offered in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Pacific and Caribbean areas through continuous sign-up, with announced cut-off dates for ranking and funding applications.

CSP is available to all producers regardless of operation size, crops produced, or geographic location. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, non-industrial private forest land, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

Potential applicants are encouraged to use the CSP self-screening checklist to determine whether CSP is suitable for their operation. The checklist, which highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, contract obligations, and payments, and additional information about CSP, may be obtained from the national CSP Web site at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html.

To apply, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service office at your [local NRCS office](#).

For details on changes to CSP, the final rule can be viewed at:
<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-12699.pdf>.

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