

# Applications being accepted

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that producers nationwide are invited to apply for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Stewardship Program.

Authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, the Conservation Stewardship Program offers payments to producers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and who agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship.

Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland and non-industrial forestland.

The deadline to be considered for the next ranking and funding period is June 11, 2010.

"Voluntary conservation practices by producers are an essential part of our effort to improve soil and water quality," Vilsack said.

"Broad and diverse participation in the Conservation Stewardship Program will provide producers with many benefits such as enhancing wildlife habitat and helping to mitigate the impact of climate change."

"I encourage producers who are interested in the Conservation Stewardship Program to take the opportunity to sign an application at their local Natural Resources Conservation Service office by the deadline June 11," said Eric B. Banks, State Conservationist for Natural Resources Conservation Service in Kansas.

"Then they will be ready when the final rule is issued."

Congress limited enrollment for the Conservation Stewardship Program nationally at 12.7 million acres per year.

Applicants will compete within state-identified ranking pools. The Conservation Stewardship Program is offered in all 50 states, District of Columbia and the Pacific and Caribbean areas through continuous sign-ups with announced cut-off application dates for ranking periods.

Under the interim final rule published July 29, 2009, eligible producers may submit an application to enroll eligible land in the Conservation Stewardship Program on a continuous basis.

Producers are encouraged to apply for the Conservation Stewardship Program now to ensure their applications will be considered during the next funding and ranking period.

However, they can make their final decision to participate in the program once the Conservation Stewardship Program final rule is issued. The final rule will establish the policies and procedures for the program.

Potential applicants are encouraged to use the Conservation Stewardship Program self-screening checklist to determine if the new program is suitable for their operation.

The checklist highlights basic information about the Conservation Stewardship Program eligibility requirements, contract obligations and potential payments.

It is available from local Natural Resources Conservation Service offices or on the Natural Resources Conservation Service

Web site at [http://www.NaturalResourcesConservationService.usda.gov/programs/new\\_ConsevationStewardshipProgram/ConservationStewardshipProgram.html](http://www.NaturalResourcesConservationService.usda.gov/programs/new_ConsevationStewardshipProgram/ConservationStewardshipProgram.html).

The Conservation Stewardship Program offers payments for adding conservation practices and maintaining and managing existing conservation practices.

For more information about the Conservation Stewardship Program, please visit [http://www.NaturalResourcesConservationService.usda.gov/programs/new\\_ConsevationStewardshipProgram/ConservationStewardshipProgram.html](http://www.NaturalResourcesConservationService.usda.gov/programs/new_ConsevationStewardshipProgram/ConservationStewardshipProgram.html).

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is celebrating

75 years helping people help the land in 2010.

Since 1935 the Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation delivery system has advanced a unique partnership with state and local governments and producers delivering conservation based on specific, local conservation needs, while accommodating state and national interests.

President Franklin Roosevelt created the Soil Conservation Service, now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service, in 1935 to help farmers and ranchers overcome the devastating effects of drought, especially in the Midwest and Northern Plains regions.



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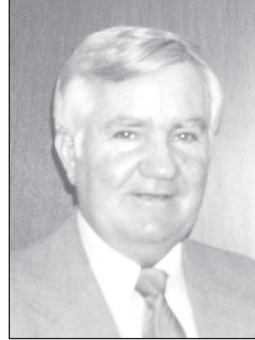
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