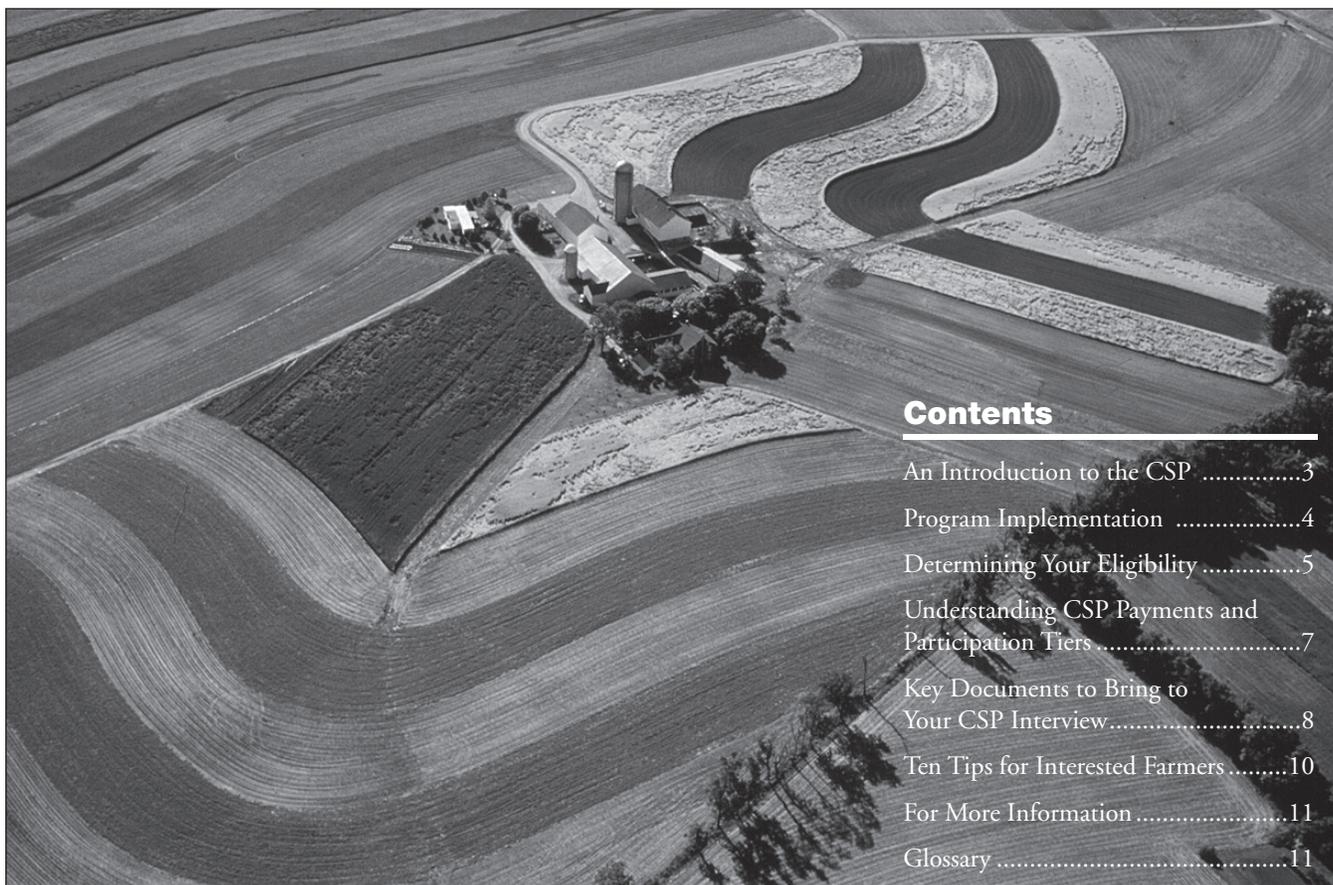


The Conservation Security Program

A Guide for Interested Farmers



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THE MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL WATER QUALITY PROGRAM IS A COORDINATED EFFORT AMONG:
DELAWARE STATE UNIVERSITY; UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE; UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND;
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, EASTERN SHORE; THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY;
VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY; VIRGINIA TECH; WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY; WEST VIRGINIA
STATE UNIVERSITY

PERSPECTIVE:

The Conservation Security Program and the Future of Farm Subsidies

As a farmer, why should you be interested in the USDA's new Conservation Security Program (CSP)? It's getting a lot of attention from policy "wonks" and farm, conservation, and environmental organizations, but why should a farmer pay attention?

First, there is the practical side in the near term. The CSP pays fairly good incentives for practicing good conservation. The CSP contracts are based on farmers' documented history of conservation and agreement to continue these practices. If you agree to implement even more conservation practices in the future, your opportunity for financial rewards is even greater. Farmers have said for some time that society should reward good conservation since it provides off-farm benefits to farm neighbors and more broadly to the public. The CSP provides those rewards. Secondly, farmers are increasingly expected to practice good conservation as a business responsibility. The CSP can help set the standard for good conservation and both recognize and reward those who practice it.

All of these are good reasons to participate in the CSP and, in or out of this program, farmers need to demonstrate that they are practicing good conservation. However, there may be a bigger, long-term reason to pay attention. The CSP is the first "green payment" program in the United States. Such programs provide incentive (or stewardship) payments to farmers who provide environmental services to the public. The payments supplement income similar to traditional commodity program production subsidies, rather than just sharing the cost of conservation practices. Green payments, or conservation incentives, may offer an alternative to production subsidies for stabilizing farm income while providing environmental benefits to society.

Why would anyone want to replace production subsidies with conservation subsidies? First, and probably most widely agreed upon, commodity payments—as price supports and incentives encouraging excess or surplus production—counter the concept of open competition in a global market. There is increasing pressure in the United States and other World Trade Organization (WTO) nations to end trade-distorting production subsidies. Conservation subsidies, on the other hand, pay farmers for resource protection and off-farm environmental benefits, not for production. Generally farm payments for these types of local public benefits are allowed under WTO rules, provided they do not directly affect prices or what is grown or raised.

Interest in replacing production subsidies with conservation subsidies started long before the 2002 Farm Bill. However, the CSP in that bill was the first major conservation subsidy in the United States. While the CSP supplements—not replaces—production subsidies, it can be viewed as an important experiment with an alternative to production subsidies.

The second reason to encourage conservation subsidies is that society receives both food security and environmental benefits and appears to favor them over production subsidies. Most people remember the media coverage and editorial and public outcry when production subsidy levels were made public on a farm-by-farm basis in 2002. While not well documented yet, it appears the public prefers a farm income stabilization program or "safety net" that provides both societal and production benefits. Conservation subsidies can stabilize farm income while providing environmental benefits.

So, why should a farmer pay attention to the CSP? Programs like the CSP are likely to be an important part of future agricultural subsidies in the United States. The CSP will change and maybe even be replaced in the future with a true conservation subsidy entitlement program, perhaps closer to what was intended in the 2002 Farm Bill. Continuing both production and conservation subsidies may be increasingly difficult to justify or afford. In the future, federal farm program funds will likely shift more toward conservation subsidies for fiscal reasons and to be consistent with WTO rules.

Whether you have or have not received production subsidies, be aware of how the CSP and similar programs can enhance conservation on your farm while providing income stability. If you have received federal farm subsidies, begin considering how your farming operation and the environment may benefit if conservation subsidies replace production subsidies. Pay attention to the CSP! It may be the bellwether of future farm programs. The CSP or its offspring are likely to be around for some time.

—Tom Simpson, University of Maryland and Mid-Atlantic
Water Quality Program Coordinator

An Introduction to the CSP

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is a voluntary conservation program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Authorized by the 2002 Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (2002 Farm Bill), the CSP encourages and rewards farmers practicing excellent stewardship on working farmland.

The program, available in all 50 states, offers financial payments and technical assistance to farmers for maintaining and increasing conservation activities. The main focus of the CSP is on soil and water quality. However, improving wildlife habitat and air quality, practicing environmentally responsible energy production, and addressing related natural resource concerns are also important program goals.

Here are some key points about the program:

- **The program rewards farmers who already practice good conservation.** This program is different from some past USDA programs, which focused on removing land from production or encouraging farmers with natural resource problems to apply corrective practices. The CSP is the first program to reward farmers who have adopted good conservation practices and provide substantial incentives to expand or enhance current conservation efforts.
- **The program is available to all farmers, regardless of operation size or crops grown.** Most past Farm Bill conservation programs have been designed primarily for cropland. But the CSP includes all types of cropland, pastureland, hay land, irrigated land, truck crops, orchards, vineyards, nurseries, and organic farming systems.
- **The size of annual CSP payments is linked to environmental performance indicators and the number of acres enrolled in the program.** While there are different types of CSP payments, most are annual, per-acre payments. Therefore, the more acres you enroll and the more environmental benefits produced, the larger your CSP payments.
- **The program is watershed based, as opposed to operating along county lines.** A watershed is the land area that drains to a particular stream, river, or lake. Because watersheds are natural boundaries, they are a useful way to group farmers addressing similar natural resource concerns.
- **CSP signup is currently limited to farmers in selected priority watersheds each year.** Expansion of the program to new watersheds in the future will be determined by future funding. Participating watersheds will change year by year.

If you're not in a CSP watershed this year, continue documenting your conservation efforts, learn more about the CSP, and be as prepared as possible when CSP comes to your watershed.

- **There are three "tiers" or levels of participation.** At Tier I you can enroll any amount of eligible land—from a single field to the entire farm—and your conservation plan must address at least soil and water-quality concerns. At the higher two tiers, the entire farm must be enrolled, with Tier II requiring that soil and water quality and at least one other resource concern* are addressed and Tier III requiring a total resource management system plan.
*Proposed requirement as of mid-March 2005.
- **There are four types of CSP payments.** The CSP offers: (1) a stewardship or base payment for qualifying (i.e., meeting all soil and water quality standards) and enrolling in the program, (2) an existing practice maintenance payment for continuing your current efforts, (3) new-practice cost-share payments if new practices are being added, and (4) enhancement payments for superior conservation performance.
- **Farmers are responsible for assessing their own eligibility for the CSP.** If you are interested in the CSP, you will need to complete the CSP Self-Assessment Workbook and answer questions about your farming operation and conservation practices. The workbook is available at your local NRCS office or on the Web at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>.
- **Farmers are responsible for gathering documents and records to provide proof of existing conservation efforts.** If you are interested in the CSP, you will need to gather records for tillage, crop rotations, soil testing, and nutrient and pesticide applications. The importance of record keeping cannot be overstressed. Farmers who have received CSP payments had accurate records of past manure, nutrient, pesticide, and grazing-management practices.
- **Once you qualify for the CSP, you will be placed in an enrollment category.** NRCS will first fund the highest enrollment categories across all three participation tiers (I, II, III). NRCS will continue funding down through the enrollment categories until funding is exhausted. Therefore, not all qualified farmers may be awarded a CSP contract. The enrollment categories may change from year to year, but they are based broadly on the degree of natural resource protection.

Program Implementation

- **USDA currently limits CSP signup each year to select priority watersheds.** The CSP watersheds are based on a classification system developed by the U.S. Geological Survey. There are more than 2,000 CSP-sized watersheds throughout the nation (see map). The 2002 Farm Bill envisioned the program operating in all watersheds nationwide, rather than in selected watersheds. Unless Congress lifts the funding cap placed on the program for the past two years, the program will likely continue to rotate by watershed until all areas are served.
- **The number of priority watersheds selected annually is expanding.** In 2004, the CSP was implemented in 18 priority watersheds (Figure 1). In 2005, that number increased to 202 priority watersheds throughout the United States (Figure 2). Even though the CSP might not be offered in your watershed this year, keep applying and documenting your conservation practices and systems so you'll be prepared for future years.
- **In the Mid-Atlantic Region (PA, MD, DE, VA, WV) there are more than 100 CSP-sized watersheds.** In 2004, only producers in the Raystown Watershed of Pennsylvania were eligible for CSP signup. In 2005, farmers in 11 priority watersheds in the Mid-Atlantic region are eligible in addition to the Raystown Watershed (Figure 3).
- **To determine the watershed in which your farm is located, contact your local NRCS office or visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Surf Your Watershed Web site at <http://cfpub.epa.gov/surf/locate/index/>.** To qualify for the CSP, the majority of your farmland must be within a selected priority watershed.
- **To find out if your watershed is eligible for the CSP this year, contact your local NRCS office or visit the national NRCS Web site at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>.** If you are located within a priority watershed, you will have the opportunity to attend NRCS community meetings where you will receive more detailed information and a Self-Assessment Workbook that will help you determine your eligibility. You can also get a copy of the self-assessment on the Internet at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>.



Figure 1. CSP Watersheds, FY 2004.

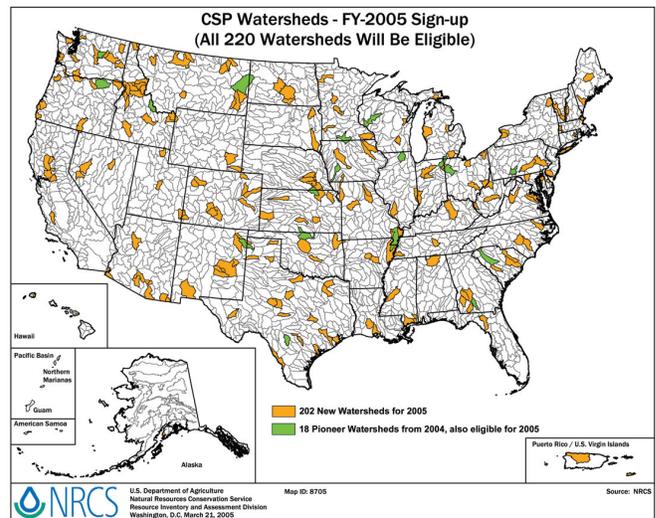


Figure 2. CSP Watersheds, FY 2005.

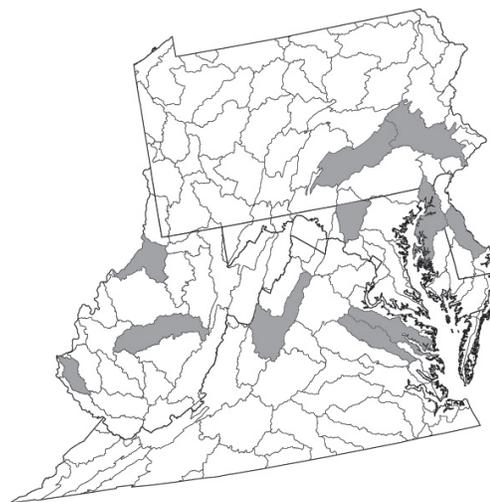


Figure 3. FY 2005 CSP Priority Watersheds in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Note: The Raystown Watershed in Pennsylvania was also made eligible in the 2005 fiscal year USDA-NRCS rules.

Table 1. 2005 CSP Priority Watersheds in the Mid-Atlantic Region.*

Watershed Name	State	Acres in Farms**	Estimated Number of Farms within Watershed
1 Broadkill-Smyrna	DE	187,394	781
2 Chester-Sassafras	MD, DE, PA	344,917	1,334
3 Monocacy	MD	302,435	2,068
4 Schuylkill	PA	356,066	3,355
5 Lower Susquehanna-Swatara	PA	461,927	3,620
6 South Fork Shenandoah	VA	457,464	3,131
7 Mattaponi	VA	131,867	517
8 Lower Rappahannock	VA	176,733	654
9 Elk	WV	106,565	616
10 Twelvepole	WV	29,973	200
11 Little Muskingum-Middle Island	WV, OH	397,939	2,441

*Note: The Raystown Watershed is also eligible in the 2005 fiscal year.

**Does not include the land enrolled in the USDA Conservation Reserve Program.

Determining Your Eligibility

To apply for the CSP:

- **You must have an active interest in the farming operation, and you must share the risk of production as well as the profit of the operation.** The federal income tax laws define “active interest” in terms of whether an individual is active in management decisions and has an investment at risk in the farm operation.
- **You must own the land or be able to control rented land enrolled in the CSP for the length of the contract.** If you lose control of rented land during the CSP contract period, the contract and payment terms will be adjusted accordingly.
- **The majority of your farming operation must be within a selected priority watershed** (Figure 3).
- **You must be in compliance with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) provisions.** The Food Security Act of 1985, as amended in the 1990, 1996, and 2002 Farm Bills, requires farmers to protect all cropland classified as being highly erodible from excessive erosion. Those farming highly erodible land and participating in government programs such as the CSP must be implementing a plan to control erosion.
- **You must be in compliance with Wetlands Conservation (Swampbuster) provisions.** The provisions are designed to prevent wetlands from being converted into cropland. If you are producing an agricultural commodity on converted wetlands you may be ineligible for the CSP. These provisions do not apply to wetlands that were converted prior to December 23, 1985.

Land eligible for CSP:

- All types of cropland, pastureland, hay land, irrigated land, truck crops, orchards, vineyards, nurseries, and organic farming systems.
- **Must not be enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, or Grassland Reserve Program.** Land already enrolled in one of these programs is not eligible for the CSP, though the rest of the farm not enrolled in one of these programs is eligible for the CSP.
- **May include a single field or the entire farm.** The CSP does not have a minimum acreage requirement for enrollment. So, for Tier I you can enroll any amount of eligible land.

The minimum level of conservation treatment required for land:

- **For cropland, you must maintain or improve soil quality prior to enrollment.** NRCS uses the Soil Conditioning Index (SCI) to estimate whether applied conservation practices will result in maintained or increased levels of soil organic matter, an indicator of soil quality. In general, for short rotations you need a high-residue crop, such as corn, with conservation tillage; for longer rotations you need hay or a perennial.
- **For cropland, you must address water resources prior to enrollment.** Addressing water-quality concerns means, at a minimum, you must control erosion and meet your state *NRCS Field Office Technical Guide* requirements for nutrients (590 Standard) and pesticides (595 Standard) for surface and ground waters. Current management practices

might include, for example, soil testing, applying nutrients based on your land-grant university's recommendations, establishing a grass filter strip, planting winter cover crops, and using integrated pest management.

- **You must show that nutrients and pesticides are not being overapplied.** You can meet nutrient and pesticide management eligibility requirements in more ways than by complying with NRCS nutrient and pest management standards. Basically, you can meet nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium management eligibility requirements by having records clearly documenting that these nutrients have not been overapplied on your farm.
- **For pasture land, you must address soil *and* water resources through a properly applied grazing-management plan.** The plan must include forage-animal balance, proper livestock distribution, and managing livestock access to water resources.
- **Nutrient Management Standard (590). Field Guide, Section #3 Quality Criteria—Nutrients in Ground, Surface Water:** In general, a certified nutrient management plan and the proper management of animal waste will meet this standard. If you do not have a certified plan, you will need to show documentation of managing the amount, source, placement, form, and timing of the application of nutrients and soil amendments.

- **Pest Management Standard (595). Field Guide, Section #3 Quality Criteria—Pesticides in Ground, Surface Water:** In general, application records including the rate and date for all pesticides used as well as the crops and specific acres treated, what pest was targeted, the application method, and the weather conditions during application will meet this standard. You should be using environmentally sensitive prevention, avoidance, monitoring, and suppression strategies to manage weeds, insects, diseases, animals, and other organisms (including invasive and noninvasive species) that directly or indirectly cause damage or annoyance.
- **Soil and Water Quality Field Guide, Section #3:** The farm should not produce significant sediment delivery to water bodies.
- **Grazing Management Standard (528a). Field Guide, Section—Pasture Conditioning Scorecard:** The controlled harvest of vegetation with grazing or browsing animals managed with the intent to achieve a specified objective. Grazing-management plan that includes forage-animal balance, proper livestock distribution, and managing livestock access to water bodies.

Understanding CSP Payments and Participation Tiers

The CSP offers four types of payments. The type of payment for which you may be eligible depends on what type of conservation practices you are implementing.

Table 2. CSP Payment Types.

Payment	Type	Description	Maximum CSP Payment Rates from Raystown Watershed, Pennsylvania in 2004 (per acre)			
			Land Type	Tier I	Tier II	Tier III
Stewardship Payment	Annual, per-acre	This annual, per-acre payment is your reward for practicing good conservation and for qualifying and enrolling in the CSP.	Cropland	\$6.00	\$10.00	\$16.00
			Pasture Land	\$2.70	\$4.50	\$7.20
Existing Practice Maintenance Payment	Annual, per-acre	This payment is for continuing your current conservation efforts that have been providing environmental benefits.	Cropland	\$6.00	\$10.00	\$16.00
			Pasture Land	\$-2.70	\$4.50	\$7.20
New-Practice Cost-Share Payment	One-time	These are one-time cost-sharing payments (not to exceed 50% federal cost share) for installation of new structural practices and adoption of new management practices.	Example Practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical area planting • Filter strip • Riparian forest buffer • Stripcropping 			
Enhancement Payment	Annual	This payment is for exceptional conservation effort and additional conservation practices.	Example of Common Enhancements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precision nutrient application • Use of cover crops • Managed, rotational grazing • Control animal access to streams • Establish forested buffers • On-farm conservation monitoring and evaluation 			

Table 3. CSP Tiers of Participation.

Contract Level (Tier)	Resources Issues Addressed	Extent of Farm Area Addressed	Length of Contract	Maximum Annual Payment
I	At least soil and water quality	Part of farm	5 years	\$20,000
II	At least soil and water quality plus one additional resource concern (e.g., wildlife)*	All of farm	5–10 years	\$35,000
III	All resources	All of farm	5–10 years	\$45,000

Adapted from B. A. Johnson, RS21739—The Conservation Security Program in the 2002 Farm Bill, <http://www.ncseonline.org/NLE/CRS/abstract.cfm?NLEid=532877>.

*Requirement as of mid-March 2005.

Table 4. CSP Annual Payment Types and Payment Caps (According to Participation Tiers*).

Payment Name	Tier I Payment Cap	Tier II Payment Cap	Tier III Payment Cap
Stewardship Payment	\$5,000 per year	\$10,500 per year	\$13,500 per year
Existing Practice Maintenance Payment	\$1,250 per year	\$2,625 per year	\$3,375 per year
New-Practice Cost-Share Payment	\$10,000 per contract	\$10,000 per contract	\$10,000 per contract
Enhancement Payment	\$10,000	\$17,500	\$22,500
<i>Total Payments</i>	<i>\$20,000</i>	<i>\$35,000</i>	<i>\$45,000</i>

*Proposed requirement as of mid-March 2005.

Key Documents to Bring to Your CSP Interview

Part of the CSP application process entails an interview so that your farming practices can be verified. When you go to your interview, you must bring along your records of conservation practices. Table 5, although not all inclusive, can serve as a guide for which documents you should bring. If you are a Tier III applicant, you need to bring all information showing that you meet all applicable NRCS Field Guide Section 3 Technical Standards (e.g., barnyard management, manure handling and storage, and pesticide handling and storage). A certified nutrient management plan and the proper management of animal waste will meet these standards. If you do not have a certified plan, you will need to show documentation of managing the amount, source, placement, form, and timing of the application of nutrients and soil amendments.

—Adapted from 2004 CSP St. Joseph Watershed in Mississippi

Table 5. Documents Needed for CSP Interview.

Nutrient Management		
Nutrient Management Records	✓	Fertilizer and manure application (on a field basis).
	✓	Type of fertilizer and analysis (from labels).
	✓	Manure test results.
	✓	Plant tissue analysis results, if any.
Nutrient Management Plans or Schedules	✓	Nutrient management plan, waste utilization plan, CNMP, or other plans related to nutrients that you have. If you do not have a plan, be prepared to describe, using written records, how you make nutrient management decisions.
	✓	Maps that show field boundaries, field acres, approximate location of conservation practices, sensitive areas, active or abandoned wells, and setbacks for manure application.
	✓	Any other maps that will indicate how you have managed nutrients on your operation, such as soil maps, yield maps, or maps showing different management units.
Crop Records	✓	Field-by-field (or groups of similar fields) cropping records, including planting and harvesting dates, yield history, tillage methods, and residue left on the surface. The complete crop rotation schedule for each field. Document if high-residue crops were grown at least 1 out of 3 years. Document if cover crops are used or hay is in rotation.
Manure	✓	Amount of manure produced annually; animal wastes produced off the farm and imported; timing, rate, and method of application to fields.
Soil Tests and Other Analyses	✓	General soil test reports for each field.
	✓	In-season or post-harvest soil tests: presidedress nitrogen tests.
	✓	Analysis of plant tissue, manure, or other animal wastes such as milk house waste water.
Pest Management		
Pest Control Records	✓	Application rates and dates for all pesticides used on the acres you would like to include in CSP. Indicate the crops and specific acres treated, what pest was targeted, the application method, and the weather conditions during application.
Plans and Schedules	✓	Any pest management plans and schedules you have. If you do not have a pest management plan, be prepared to describe, using written records, how you make pest management decisions.
Scouting Reports	✓	Crop scouting forms, filled out by a certified crop advisor or other trained person or the landowner or operator.
Soil Management		
Tillage	✓	The date of each tillage operation in each field (in a typical year) and the type of equipment used each time. This will be used to calculate soil loss and soil condition scores.
Erosion Control	✓	Evidence of controlling soil erosion, wind erosion, and gullies (use maps or other records to support your discussion).
Pasture Management		
Grazing Plan	✓	Bring in your grazing plan. If you do not have a plan, be prepared to explain, using written records, how you make decisions about grazing. Document the number and types of livestock being grazed, acres and types of forage, planned grazing periods and rest periods, refuge areas, if any, and location of fences, watering facilities, sensitive areas, and surface waters.
Livestock Control	✓	Describe how livestock are excluded from surface water, woodland, wellheads, and other sensitive areas.
Nutrient Management	✓	Soil test reports.
Waste Management	✓	Bring in waste utilization plan, or be prepared to describe, using written records, how manure is handled if applied to grazing land.
Weeds	✓	Bring in pest management plan, or be prepared to support an explanation of how you manage noxious weeds and brush in pastures.

Ten Tips for Interested Farmers

1. Keep good records!

To qualify for the CSP you must go into your local NRCS office for an interview and show records of your current conservation practices.

2. Maintain and improve soil quality.

To qualify for the CSP you need a positive Soil Conditioning Index (SCI) score. This usually means a high-residue crop, such as corn, for short rotations and some form of conservation tillage, and hay or a perennial for longer rotations.

3. Talk with farmers who have participated in the CSP.

They can give you helpful advice based on their experiences.

4. If you're in a priority watershed this year, attend a local NRCS CSP information meeting or visit with NRCS.

Even if you are unsure that you have land that qualifies for the CSP, consider speaking with your local NRCS professionals, just to be certain. If you're interested in the CSP for the future, visit with NRCS to see if there are practices you should begin now to qualify and if there are programs to help.

5. Get a copy of the CSP Self-Assessment Workbook.

If you're in a priority watershed this year, complete the workbook (available at your local NRCS office or on the Web at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>) and start gathering the records you'll need to document conservation work on your farm. If not, review the workbook and take note of the soil and water-quality requirements.

6. Get your foot in the door.

Currently, the CSP is available only in selected priority watersheds each year. If there is a signup in your watershed, you can go one step at a time. Consider enrolling part of your farm and then expand in future years. You can qualify for the CSP even if you have just one field, pasture, or orchard that meets the designated standards. While payments might be low for a CSP contract involving just a few acres, once you're enrolled you will be able to upgrade your enrollment by adding more acres and conservation enhancements. Land eligible for the CSP must meet basic NRCS standards for soil and water quality, so consider how much of your land might qualify.

7. Enhancement payments for exceptional conservation efforts may be significant.

Enhancement payments, offered for exceptional conservation efforts and additional conservation practices, represent the best financial rewards. For example, as shown in Table 4, you can earn up to \$22,500 in annual enhancement payments if you qualify for Tier III participation. Although you may need to start small, you can set goals that will help you qualify for enhancement payments in the future. It is also important to remember that the size of annual CSP payments is linked to the number of acres enrolled in the program.

8. Think comprehensively.

The CSP rewards producers who are broadly addressing many different resource concerns.

9. Be prepared!

When the CSP comes to your watershed there will be a limited time to enroll. The sign-up period for the 2005 CSP will begin near the end of March 2005 and will be open for 60 days. Learn about the program and keep your records updated so you will be ready to enroll when the time comes.

10. Get started now!

If the CSP is offered in your watershed this year, complete the CSP Self-Assessment Workbook, gather documentation for tillage, crop rotations, soil testing, and nutrient and pesticide applications, and attend a local NRCS informational meeting. The importance of record keeping cannot be overstressed. Farmers who received CSP payments in 2004 had good records of past manure, nutrient, and pest management practices. If you're interested in the CSP for the future, review the Self-Assessment Workbook and the soil and water quality standards for your operation and start or continue documenting conservation efforts.

For More Information

- Start by contacting your local USDA-NRCS office. Contact information for NRCS state public affairs specialist offices:

DE—Paul Petrichenko, phone: 302-678-4180

MD—Carol Hollingsworth, phone: 443-482-2902

PA—Stacy Mitchell, phone: 717-237-2208

VA—Pat Paul, phone: 804-287-1681

WV—Carol Lagodich, phone: 304-284-4826

- If you have Internet access, visit the National NRCS Conservation Security Program Web site (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>) or your state NRCS Web site for more information:

DE—<http://www.de.nrcs.usda.gov/>

MD—<http://www.md.nrcs.usda.gov/>

PA—<http://www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov/>

VA—<http://www.va.nrcs.usda.gov/>

WV—<http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/>

- For additional copies of this publication or to learn more about other CSP education resources, contact one of the following state land-grant university cooperative extension specialists:

DE—David Hansen, University of Delaware,
djhansen@udel.edu

MD—Douglas Parker, University of Maryland,
dparker@arec.umd.edu

PA—Charles Abdalla, The Pennsylvania State University,
CAbdalla@psu.edu

VA—James Pease, Virginia Tech, peasej@vt.edu

WV—Thomas Basden, West Virginia University,
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Glossary

Conservation Security Program (CSP)—A voluntary conservation program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The CSP encourages and rewards farmers practicing outstanding stewardship on working farmland.

CSP Payments—Four types of payments offered for different levels of participation in the CSP:

1. A stewardship or base payment for qualifying and enrolling in the program
2. An existing practice maintenance payment for continuing your current efforts
3. New-practice cost-share payments if new practices are being added
4. Enhancement payments for superior conservation performance

Field Office Technical Guides—The primary scientific reference for NRCS. The guides contain technical information about the conservation of soil, water, air, and related plant and animal resources. Technical guides are state specific and apply specifically to state geographic regions. The NRCS guide is available in electronic form (E-FOTG) at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/>.

Participation Tiers—Three levels of participation in the CSP:

Tier I: Any amount of eligible land, from a single field to the entire farm, can be enrolled. The conservation plan must address at least soil and water quality concerns.

Tier II: Entire farm must be enrolled. Soil and water quality plus at least one other resource concern must be addressed.

Tier III: Entire farm must be enrolled. A total resource management plan must be in place.

Priority Watershed—A watershed eligible for the CSP. Priority watersheds are selected using several criteria, including the variety of agricultural land uses, resource issues to be addressed, and the history of conservation among landowners.

Soil Conditioning Index (SCI)—A prediction tool used by NRCS in conservation planning to estimate whether applied conservation practices will result in maintained or increased levels of soil organic matter. Trends in soil organic matter are assumed to be an indicator of soil-quality trends.

Watershed—The land area that drains to a particular water body, such as a stream, river, lake, or bay.

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Reviewed by Barry Frantz, Pennsylvania state resource conservationist for programs, USDA-NRCS; and Ferd Hoefner, policy director, Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.



Land grant universities and USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), working with U.S. EPA Region 3, have formed a partnership to advance water quality protection and restoration efforts in the Mid-Atlantic by providing water quality science support, training, and education.

To learn more about the Mid-Atlantic Regional Water Quality Program visit our Web site at: <http://www.mawaterquality.org/>.

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