



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Massachusetts State Office

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USDA urges Massachusetts farmers to sign up now for Conservation Stewardship Program

Applications will be accepted through June 11, 2010 for current funding

AMHERST, MA (May 25, 2010) – Massachusetts farmers are invited to apply for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, CSP 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 and non-industrial forestland. **The deadline to be considered for the current ranking and funding period is June 11, 2010.**

Through CSP, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers payments for adding conservation practices and maintaining and managing existing conservation practices.

"Voluntary conservation practices by farmers are an essential part of our effort to improve soil and water quality," said Christine Clarke, NRCS Massachusetts State Conservationist. "CSP encourages farmers who are good land stewards to improve their conservation efforts by adopting additional activities, and improving and maintaining existing activities on agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land."

For more information about CSP, please visit www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html. To sign up for CSP, farmers should call or visit their local USDA Service Center. USDA Service Center locations are listed on-line at offices.usda.gov or in the phone book under Federal Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Potential applicants are encouraged to use the CSP self-screening checklist to determine if the new program is suitable for their operation. The checklist highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, contract obligations and potential payments. It is available from local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service offices or on the NRCS Web site at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html.

The program is offered nationwide through continuous sign-ups with announced cut-off application dates for ranking periods. Congress limited enrollment for CSP nationally at 12.7 million acres per year. In each ranking period, Massachusetts applications will be evaluated and ranked among others submitted in the state that address similar priority natural resource concerns.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is celebrating its 75th year of helping people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. NRCS has seven Massachusetts field offices – in Greenfield, Hadley, Holden, Hyannis, Pittsfield, Westford, and West Wareham – that work with local conservation districts and other partners to serve farmers and landowners throughout the commonwealth.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: If you would like to include local contact information, please use the office below that serves your area.

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