

Applications will now be accepted through Jan. 21.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has extended the ranking period cut-off date for producers to apply for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) to Jan. 21.

CSP is a voluntary program that encourages agricultural and forestry producers to maintain existing conservation activities and adopt additional ones on their operations by providing financial incentives.

CSP is available statewide. The program provides many conservation benefits including improving water and soil quality, wildlife habitat enhancement and adopting conservation practices that address the effects of climate change.

Producers are encouraged to apply for CSP at their local NRCS office. The program, authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, offers payments to producers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and who agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship.

Eligible land includes cropland, grassland, prairie, improved pastureland, non-industrial private forestland, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe. Additional assistance is available to beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

A CSP self-screening checklist is available to help producers determine if CSP is suitable for their operation. The checklist highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, contract obligations and potential payments.

It is available from local NRCS offices or online at

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html.