



Michigan Association of Conservation Districts

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“Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan”

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Michigan agricultural producers can begin sign up for new USDA Conservation Stewardship Program Continuous Enrollment Period scheduled for Aug. 10 through September 30

EAST LANSING, Aug. 7, 2009 – Michigan agricultural producers and forest owners can begin signing up for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s new Conservation Stewardship Program on August 10 with the first signup period cutoff scheduled for September 30.

Michigan Conservation Districts, as the local providers of natural resource services to private landowners, are encouraging individuals to take part in the voluntary program that offers payments to producers who maintain existing conservation activities and adopt additional ones on their operations.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a new program created under the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008. CSP is administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Lands eligible for the program include cropland, grassland, improved pastureland, rangeland, non-industrial private forestland, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe. Eligible applicants may include individual landowners, legal entities, and Indian tribes.

Under the new program, producers will enroll their entire agricultural or forestry operation into the program. Producers accepted in the program will receive payments based on the existing conservation measures they maintain and new conservation measures they agree to implement.

To apply for CSP, potential participants are encouraged to use a self-screening checklist to determine whether the new program is suitable for them or their operation. Producers can submit applications at their local NRCS field office. Applications submitted by producers who have completed the self-screening checklist will be ranked competitively according to national and state priority resource concerns.

NRCS field staff will conduct on-site field verifications before potential participants are approved for funding. Approved participants must also develop a conservation stewardship plan.

CSP replaces the Conservation Security Program that was only available to producers in designated watersheds. The program will be offered to producers nationwide through continuous sign-ups. Agricultural and non-industrial private forestry producers must submit applications by Sept. 30 to be considered for funding in the first ranking period. Congress capped the annual acreage enrollment at 12,769,000 acres for each fiscal year nationwide.

For information about CSP, including eligibility requirements, producers can contact their local Conservation District, NRCS field office, or USDA Service Center. More information is also available on the Web at www.macd.org and/or www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp.html.

USDA is finalizing the program’s policies and procedures. The CSP interim final rule, published in the Federal Register, is open for public comment through Sept. 28.

The Michigan Association of Conservation Districts is a non-profit organization that represents the interests of Michigan Conservation Districts and works to strengthen Districts through leadership, information and representation.

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