



# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Natural Resources Conservation Service  
[www.il.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.il.nrcs.usda.gov)

## Application: What You Need

- » Pre-Screening tool
- » Signed CSP application submitted to your local NRCS field office
- » Review the Activity List



## Payments

Through **five-year contracts**, NRCS makes payments after October 1 for contract activities installed and maintained in the previous fiscal year (Oct. 1 - Sept. 30).

- » **Payment Limit.** A person or legal entity may have more than one CSP contract, but for all CSP contracts combined, may not receive more than \$40,000 in any year or more than \$200,000 during any five-year period.
- » **Contract Limit.** The contract limit is the same as the payment limit except in the case of joint operations, for which the contract limit is \$80,000 per fiscal year and \$400,000 over the term of the contract period.



## CSP Application Process

### Signing Up

NRCS makes CSP available through continuous sign-up, with announced cut-off dates.

### Application Rankings

Applications are evaluated and ranked. (Agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land applications are ranked separately.) In the ranking process, producers get credit for:

- » conservation measures they have already implemented, and
- » new measures they agree to add.

### Self-Screening

Potential applicants are encouraged to determine whether CSP is right for them by completing the self-screening checklist and reviewing the CSP Conservation Activity List to identify new conservation activities they might adopt.

Because some conservation enhancements work well when implemented as a group, the activity list identifies enhancement “bundles” that receive both higher rankings and higher payments.

If an applicant is pre-approved for funding, NRCS conducts on-site field verification to ensure that the information provided is accurate. Once the information is verified, NRCS and the applicant proceed to develop the contract.

## More Information

For more information about CSP, visit your local NRCS field office. CSP information is also available on the national website at [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov) or the Illinois NRCS website at [www.il.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.il.nrcs.usda.gov).

## What is CSP?

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary USDA program that encourages agricultural and forestry producers to address resource concerns by:

1. Maintaining, improving and managing existing conservation activities; and
2. Adopting additional conservation activities (enhancements).

CSP provides financial and technical assistance to help land stewards conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land.

## Protecting Resources

CSP addresses the following **resource concerns**:

- » soil quality
- » soil erosion
- » water quality
- » water quantity
- » air quality
- » plant resources
- » animal resources
- » energy

## Who is eligible?

CSP is available to all producers, regardless of operation size, crops produced, or geographical location.

Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, and nonindustrial private forest land.

Applicants may include individuals, legal entities, or joint operations. They must:

- » be the operator of record in the USDA farm records management system for the eligible land being offered for enrollment;
- » have effective control of the land for the term of the proposed contract; and
- » include the eligible land in their entire agricultural or forestry operation.



## What are the benefits?

CSP pays participants for conservation performance – the higher the environmental performance, the higher the payment.

It provides two possible types of payments:

1. An **annual payment** is available for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing management systems and practices.
2. A **supplemental payment** is available to participants who also adopt a resource-conserving crop rotation.

# STEWARDSHIP ACROSS ILLINOIS

## CSP SUCCESS



**Daniel Steidinger** and his father David farm 600 acres with a corn, soybean, and wheat rotation in Livingston County. In 2011, they entered into a CSP contract on 482 acres. They are always looking for ways to track and better manage farm inputs because water quality improvements are important to them. They were previously planting cover crops before signing up for CSP and now receive credit for the practice on their existing CSP conservation activities. The Steidingers selected an enhancement that is helping them analyze nitrogen inputs and felt this was an easy decision that will pay off on their farm, their watershed and beyond.

Enhancement:

- » WQL04 - Conduct plant tissue tests and analysis to improve nitrogen management

## CSP SUCCESS

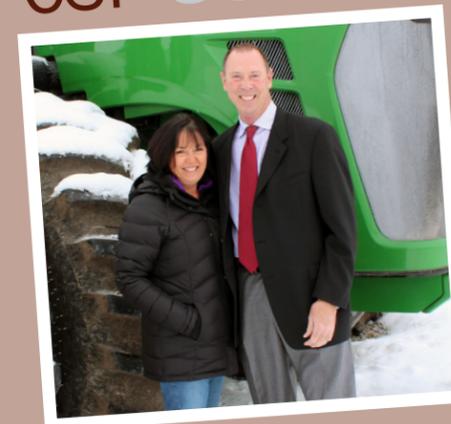


**Ralph Upton**, also known as “Junior”, currently has 1,800 acres of no-till corn, soybeans, and wheat in Hamilton County. Upton is a veteran no-tiller and long-time soil-building advocate. He has worked with EQIP and other programs for years. However, there were a few other conservation practices he wanted to experiment with, but never had the chance. CSP is perfect for that. He gets rewarded for all he’s done and CSP offers him guidance and an incentive to try something new.

Enhancements:

- » AIRO8 - Nitrification inhibitors or urease inhibitors
- » ANM18 - Retrofit watering facility for wildlife escape
- » SQL04 - Use of cover crop mixes

## CSP SUCCESS



**Kathy and Larry Bennett** farm corn and soybeans in Macon County. They enrolled 1,727 acres into a CSP contract in August of 2013 and have already had a positive experience. They were excited to use the RTK technology and updated software. They are also pleased that CSP is a program that helps them try different conservation activities that otherwise they might not be able to do. They encourage other producers who are doing good conservation work to talk with their local field office about CSP.

Enhancement:

- » AIRO4 - Use of drift-reducing nozzles, low pressures, lower boom height, and adjuvants to reduce pesticide drift
- » AIRO7 - GPS, targeted spray application (SmartSprayer), or other chemical application electronic control technology
- » WQL04 - Plant tissue tests and analysis to improve nitrogen management



### What is a CSP Enhancement?

A CSP “Enhancement” is a conservation activity used to treat natural resources and improve conservation performance. Enhancement activities exceed the sustainable level for a given resource concern.

### Common CSP Enhancements in Illinois

#### *Cropland*

- » **AIRO4** - Use of drift-reducing nozzles, low pressures, lower boom height and adjuvants to reduce pesticide drift
- » **AIRO7** - GPS, targeted spray application (SmartSprayer), or other chemical application electronic control technology
- » **SQL04** - Use of cover crop mixes
- » **SQL05** - Use of deep-rooted crops to breakup soil compaction
- » **WQL04** - Conduct plant tissue tests and analysis to improve nitrogen management
- » **WQL11** - Use of precision application technology to apply nutrients

#### *Pastureland*

- » **AIRO4** - Use of drift-reducing nozzles, low pressures, lower boom height and adjuvants to reduce pesticide drift
- » **ANM03** - Incorporate native grasses and/or legumes into 15% or more of herbage dry matter productivity
- » **ANM26** - Manage calving to coincide with forage availability
- » **WQL03** - Rotate supplement and feeding areas

#### *Non-Industrial Private Forestland*

- » **ANM33** - Create riparian buffer, terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitat
- » **PLT05** - Use multi-story cropping, sustainable management of non-timber forest plants
- » **PLT15** - Establish pollinator and/or beneficial insect habitat
- » **PLT17** - Create forest openings to improve hardwood stands