

Nebraska landowners and operators have until Jan. 17, 2014, to sign up for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) at a local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office.

CSP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to help farmers and ranchers conserve and enhance soil, water, air and related natural resources on their agricultural and forestry land.

CSP applications are accepted at any time. However, only applications received by the Jan. 17 cutoff date will be considered for the current ranking and funding period.

Craig Derickson, NRCS state conservationist, encourages Nebraska farmers and ranchers to not miss out on this opportunity.

“The Conservation Stewardship Program is unique. CSP participants will receive an annual land use payment for the environmental benefits they produce on their operations. Under CSP, participants are paid for conservation performance - the higher the operational performance, the higher their payment,” Derickson said.

According to Derickson, CSP has been a very successful program for Nebraska’s farmers and ranchers. Over 2,000 CSP contracts occur in all 93 counties and cover 4.8 million acres in Nebraska.

“CSP is popular in Nebraska because farmers and ranchers don’t have to take land out of production to participate. CSP helps conserve natural resources on working lands, ” Derickson said.

CSP is available statewide to individual landowners, legal entities and Indian tribes.

Eligible land includes cropland, grassland, prairie, improved pastureland, non-industrial private forestland and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

Contracts are set at five years and include all the land controlled by an operator.

For more information about CSP, including eligibility requirements and a self-screening checklist, producers can visit www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CSP.html or stop by a local NRCS field office.