

# USDA FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Prescribed Fire Workshop for Private Landowners

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(serving clients of USDA, NRCS and VA DGIF)

# USDA CONSERVATION AGENCIES

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Technical agency staffed by technical professionals with partners in forest and wildlife habitat management.

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Agency administering programs to assist farmers stay solvent, partners with NRCS

# Natural Resource Conservation Service Programs

## Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Financial assistance program that funds conservation practice implementation.

## Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Financial assistance program that rewards good conservation landowners who enhance their operations with additional practices.

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Priorities (with dedicated funding pools, some mandated)

Conservation on Livestock Operations (minimum 60%)

Conservation on Cropland

Forest Management

Longleaf Pine Establishment

Wildlife Habitat Establishment and Management (minimum 5%)

On-Farm Energy Conservation

Organic Farming Assistance

# EQIP – Forest Management Priorities

Designed for Establishment of Hardwoods,  
Longleaf Pine, and Shortleaf Pine Only, Not  
Loblolly Pine

Designed for Management of All Species with  
Firebreaks, Prescribed Burning, Thinning,  
Herbicide Application to Release Crop Trees  
from Weeds, and Control of Brush and  
Herbaceous Weeds

# EQIP – Wildlife Habitat Priorities

Designed for Early Successional Habitat in Open Fields of Native Grasses and Wildflowers or in the Understories of Thinned Trees

Designed for Management with Firebreaks, Prescribed Burning, Thinning, Herbicide Application to Release Crop Trees from Weeds, and Control of Brush and Herbaceous Weeds

# EQIP – Wildlife Habitat Priorities

Designed for Establishment of Native Grasses and Wildflowers for Wildlife and Pollinator Species, Shrubs in Hedgerows and Blocks, and Native Trees at a Very Low Density

Habitat Establishment with Non-Native Species IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

## Virginia Priority Resource Concerns – Agricultural Land

Degraded Plant Condition

Livestock Production Limitation

Soil Erosion

Soil Quality Degradation

Water Quality Degradation



# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

**Virginia Priority Resource Concerns – Forest Land**

Degraded Plant Condition

Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat

Soil Erosion

Soil Quality Degradation

Water Quality Degradation

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

## **Enhancements**

CSP is designed to reward landowners who have met a basic level of resource protection and implement additional conservation practices to go beyond that basic level of protection.

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

## **Enhancements on Forest Land**

Brush Management

Herbaceous Weed Control

Native Grasses and Wildflowers for Pollinators

Prescribed Burning at Frequent Intervals

Increased Stream Shading

Increased Width of Riparian Areas

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

## **Enhancements on Forest Land**

Improved Grazing Management in Forests

Elimination of Stream Crossings by Cattle

Improved Streambank Stabilization

Improved Stream Corridor Vegetation

Planting Trees and Shrubs to Restore Natives

Planting Trees and shrubs for Wildlife Food

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

## **Enhancements on Forest Land**

Tree and Shrub Planting for Wildlife Cover

Limit Soil Compaction

Convert Loblolly Pine to Longleaf Pine

Crop Tree Management for Mast Production

Thin Forests to Improve Forest Health

Create Forest Stand Diversity with Patch Cutting

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

## **Enhancements on Forest Land**

Create Snags for Wildlife

Increase Species Diversity in Monoculture Loblolly  
Pine Stands

# Environmental Incentives Program (EQIP) Eligibility

Applicants must:

Be engaged in agriculture or forestry and have a farm number and tract established with the Farm Service Agency.

Comply with adjusted gross income limitation (AGI) provisions (\$900,000).

Control or own eligible land.

# Environmental Incentives Program (EQIP) Eligibility

Applicants must:

Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements.

Develop an NRCS EQIP plan of operations (conservation plan).



# Environmental Incentives Program (EQIP) Benefits

EQIP financial assistance is based on the average cost of implementing the practices in a multi-state area around Virginia.

The EQIP plan of operations includes the amount of financial assistance for each practice by the year in which the practices are planned.

# Environmental Incentives Program (EQIP) Process

EQIP has a continuous application process, but the applications are ranked and selected for funding on a fiscal year basis (beginning October 1).

Applications are ranked at established dates early in the fiscal year.

# Environmental Incentives Program (EQIP) Process

Contracts are developed with landowners selected for funding.

Contracts are based on the EQIP plan of operations (conservation plan) and that plan will include multiple conservation practices designed to meet a minimum level of resource protection.

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Eligibility

Applicants must:

Be engaged in agriculture or forestry and have a farm number and tract established with the Farm Service Agency.

Comply with adjusted gross income limitation (AGI) provisions (\$900,000).

Control or own eligible land.

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Eligibility

Applicants must:

Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements.

Include all of their land in the application.

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Eligibility

Applicants may include individuals, legal entities, joint operations or Indian tribes that meet the stewardship threshold for at least two priority resource concerns when they apply. They must also agree to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for at least one additional priority resource concern by the end of the contract.

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Benefits

Participants take additional steps to improve resource condition including soil quality, water quality, water quantity, air quality, and habitat quality, as well as energy.

CSP provides two types of payments through five-year contracts:

Annual payments for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing practices.

Supplemental payments for adopting a resource-conserving crop rotation.

Producers may be able to renew a contract if they have successfully fulfilled the initial contract and agree to achieve additional conservation objectives. Payments are made soon as practical after October 1 of each fiscal year for contract activities installed and maintained in the previous year.

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Process

Application deadlines are established each fiscal year, usually in the spring.

The application's ranking will depend on the enhancements selected for the land.

Applications are ranked and the landowners associated with the highest ranking applications are offered contracts.

Maximum contract amounts: \$40K per year, \$200K for 5 years.



# Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Administers the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a program that restores highly erodible land and other environmentally sensitive land to perennial vegetation.

# Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

## Benefits:

- Protects Land and Creates Habitat
- Compensates Landowners for Part of the Cost in Seeding or Planting.
- Pays Landowners a Rental Payment for every Year in Their 10 or 15 Year Contract.

# Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Two Kinds of Signups:

- General Signup for All Practices that Only Occurs Rarely

- Continuous Signup for Water Quality Buffer Practices, Quail Buffers, Longleaf Pine, and Pollinator Habitat

# Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

General Signup:

- Applications are Ranked with the Highest Ranking Associated with the Most Complex Vegetative Cover Types
- Non-Native Grasses and Legumes and Loblolly Pine Rank the lowest

# Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Continuous Signup:

- Applications are not Ranked

- Applications that Meet the Basic Requirements are Accepted if Acreage under the Cap is Available

# Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

## Acreage Cap

- In the Farm Bill, there are Acreage Caps for the CRP for Every Year Covered by the Farm Bill.
- Every Year Landowners Drop Out of the Program and Acres Become Available.
- The Acreage Cap has Been Met for 2018.
- The Acreage Cap will be Considered Again in 2019.