



**Natural Resources Conservation Service**  
100 W. Capitol Street, Suite 1321  
Jackson, MS 39269  
*R. Kavanaugh Breazeale, Public Affairs Specialist*

For more information contact  
Gregory W. Brinson  
601.965.5205, ext. 111  
[gregory.brinson@ms.usda.gov](mailto:gregory.brinson@ms.usda.gov)

### **USDA Accepting Applications for Conservation Stewardship Program \$100 million Expected to Attract Enrollment of 7.7 Million Acres for Conservation**

Jackson, Miss., Jan. 28, 2015 –The U.S. Department of Agriculture will make available \$100 million this year through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and although applications are accepted all year, farmers, ranchers and forest landowners should submit applications by February 27, 2015 to ensure they are considered for this year's funding. Applications received after that date will be considered for future funding. This year's investment may result in the enrollment of up to 7.7 million acres in the program by private landowners.

"CSP is a way of incentivizing farmers, ranchers, and private forest managers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship," said State Conservationist Kurt Readus with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Mississippi. "By focusing on multiple resource concerns, landowners can achieve a sustainable landscape and maintain or increase the productivity of their operations."

Through CSP, participants take additional conservation steps to improve the resource conditions on their land, including soil, air and habitat quality, water quality and quantity, and energy conservation. Several new activities are offered in FY 2015 to address resource concerns, including many new forestry activities.

Readus said CSP producers are conservation leaders, showing how science-based conservation and technological advancements can improve the environment and farming operations at the same time. For example, Mississippi farmer Kenny Rodgers participated in several activities that benefitted his operation. He used drift reducing nozzles and targeting spray application to reduce the amount and placement of pesticides on his corn and soybean crops. This helped improve water quality, air quality, and the environment. He also utilized nutrient and fertilizer management to ensure that he only adds the amount of nutrients that the crops will use, through precise timing, to support soil and water quality. This program has also allowed him to address wildlife concerns on his property by leaving standing grain and water holding areas during the winter months.

CSP will also help broaden the impacts of NRCS' Landscape Conservation Initiatives through a new pilot effort, which accelerates private lands conservation activities to address particular goals, such as creating habitat for at-risk species and conserving and cleaning water. The landscape initiative offered in Mississippi is the Longleaf Pine Initiative.

Applications should be submitted to local NRCS offices. As part of the CSP application process, applicants will work with NRCS field personnel to complete a resource inventory of their land, which will help determine the conservation performance for existing and new conservation activities. The applicant's conservation performance will be used to determine eligibility, ranking, and payments.

For more on technical and financial assistance available through conservation programs, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted) or a [local USDA service center](#).

#