

Step Three: Your Conservation Plan

If you do not have a conservation plan on file, the NRCS representative will schedule an appointment with you to complete the on-site assessment and plan. If you already have a conservation plan on file, the NRCS representative will go over your plan. Then you will decide which practices you want to include in the program application(s), and complete the application process.

A conservation plan serves as a blueprint for you to identify your natural resource conservation goals and how you plan to achieve them by changing your management and/or installing conservation practices. NRCS works with you to identify your goals and balances those goals with your economic needs to write your conservation plan.

Step Four: Application and Ranking

Your NRCS representative will complete the application(s) for specific programs in the computer system, ask for any additional information needed, and rank the application(s). The ranking is based on federal, state and local ranking factors. After the sign-up cutoff date, the highest ranked applications will be funded until the money is exhausted.

Step Five: Signing the Contract

If the application is funded, the applicant and USDA complete the contract documents (CPC 1202 and CPC 1202 Appendix). The applicant should be aware of all contract terms, penalties for noncompliance and requirements for implementation before signing. The applicant may then begin implementing the contracted practices. If you start a practice before contract approval, this causes the practice to be ineligible for conservation program financial assistance.

Applications Forms By Program

Most programs including CSP, GRP, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), WHIP and WRP require the NRCS CPA 1200 application. However the following programs require different application forms.

CRP and CREP: Conservation Reserve Program Worksheet (CRP2)

EWP: Application for Long-Term Contracted Assistance (AD1153)

You may request any of these forms from your local USDA Service Center. You can find your local USDA Service Center in the local phone book or online at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov and click on Contact Us.

Special Note: Protecting Your Privacy

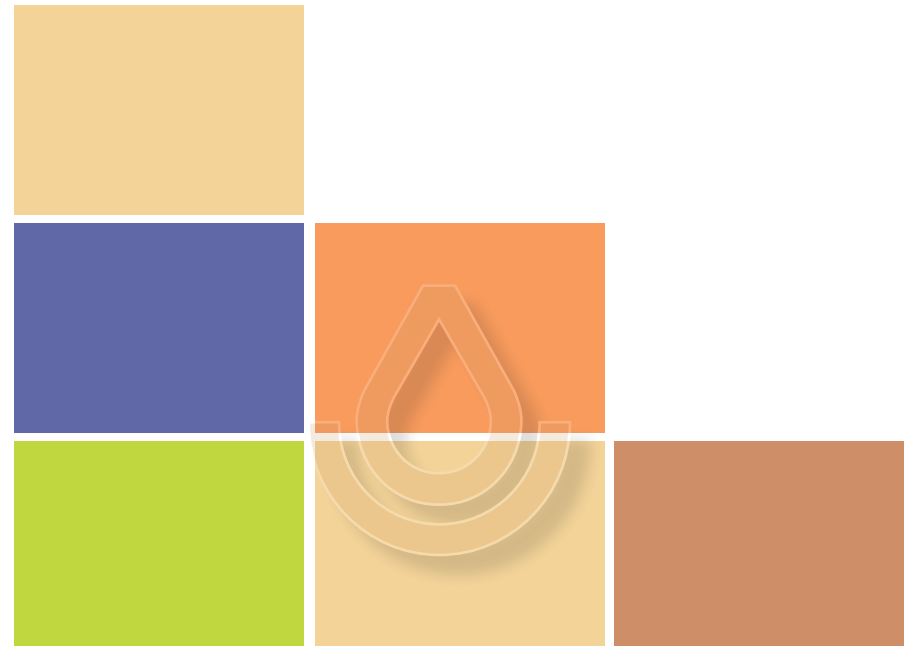
Many of the program application forms or documentation require the applicant to provide sensitive contact, financial or other confidential information. Disclosure of this data is voluntary, but failure to provide the required information may result in the deferral of an application or denial of a benefit payment. By law and policy, 'confidential, private and sensitive information' is protected by USDA. USDA employees and partners are subject to penalty and disciplinary action for inappropriate or mismanagement of private data.

STEP by STEP

Your Guide to Applying for USDA Conservation Programs

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help the Land
www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Applying for USDA conservation program assistance involves several steps and multiple forms. This guide will walk you through the application process, **step-by-step**. It will also explain the responsibilities and obligations of holding a USDA contract, once an application is approved and funded.

But first, here are some **definitions**:

Applicant: A private individual or entity that completes the application paperwork and identifies land to be enrolled in the program. The IRS identification number provided by the applicant is used to establish eligibility and generate IRS-1099s for the contract. Applicant names and ID numbers must be cross checked against IRS records to verify eligibility before an application can be accepted.

Individual: an individual who controls the enrolled land and uses their personal social security number (SSN) to apply for conservation program assistance.

Entity: any partnership, joint venture, corporation (limited liability or other), estate, trust, or non-profit association or group that controls the enrolled land and uses an employer identification number (EIN) or tax identification number (TIN) to apply for conservation program assistance.

Here's a list of **USDA conservation programs** available to eligible producers and landowners:

- CRP** — Conservation Reserve Program
- CREP** — Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
- CSP** — Conservation Stewardship Program
- EQIP** — Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- EWP** — Emergency Watershed Protection Program
- GRP** — Grassland Reserve Program
- WHIP** — Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
- WRP** — Wetland Reserve Program

Step One: Establishing Eligibility

If you have never worked with the USDA, and don't have a farm and tract number, you will need to make an appointment with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) at your local USDA Service Center to establish eligibility for USDA programs. You will need to bring the following information to the appointment:

- **Proof of Identity** – you may be required to show a valid state driver's license, passport or other personal identification, as well as provide your Social Security or Employer Identification (EIN) numbers, address and other related information.
- **Copy of the recorded deed**
- **Copy of the articles of incorporation, bylaws, legal power of attorney or partnership paperwork, if applicable**

- **Form AD 1026** — Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Determination
- **Form CCC 926** — Adjusted Gross Income
- **Form CCC 927** — Consent to Disclosure Tax Information (Individual) or **Form CCC 928** — Tax Information (Legal Entity) These forms grant IRS permission to share information with NRCS.
- **Form CCC 901** — Members' information for entity and joint operations only

Forms are available on-line at:

<http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov> by choosing 'Browse Forms,' then entering the form number. **Applications are also available at any USDA Service Center, or you can request them to be sent to you by calling your local USDA Service Center.**

Step Two: Applying for USDA Conservation Programs

Additional paperwork is required to apply for specific conservation programs, once you have established eligibility with FSA. You will need to submit the following forms and paperwork prior to any program sign-up cutoff dates. The NRCS office will have these forms and can assist you with the paperwork. Additional items by be needed for specific programs (See back page).

- **Form NRCS CPA 1200 (conservation practice application)**, signed and dated by all applicants. Please be sure to answer all questions, one through 11. You may be eligible for additional program benefits if you are able to apply as a:
 - Limited resource farmer,
 - Beginning farmer, or
 - Socially disadvantaged (minority) farmer.
- **Form NRCS CPA 1202 CPC (Conservation Practice Contract) appendix**, signed and dated by all applicants. Please read the appendix and address any questions you have to the NRCS representative.
- **Form 1199 A, direct deposit form**. You may apply for a one-time hardship waiver if you do not wish to utilize direct deposit.
- **Land ownership or control** – You will be required to provide evidence of control of land through ownership documents (deeds, etc.) or lease information (rental agreements, permits, lease, etc).
- **Signature authority** – If the applicant is an entity, documents such as articles of incorporation, charter, bylaws, partnership agreements, trust agreements, wills and similar legal evidence will be needed.

It takes time for the paperwork to be processed and additional information may be needed. Please start this process early in order to ensure you are eligible **prior** to any program sign-up cutoff dates. If you apply for a USDA program and the system does not show you or your entity as eligible, your application will not be processed or funded.

Applicants typically have 30 days from the date of the original application to correctly complete all the paperwork.