

Summary of Application Steps

1. The applicant indicates interest in one or more programs and completes the program application form, all eligibility documentation, and the Conservation Planning Worksheet.

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

2. USDA completes an initial evaluation of the land and determines the resource concerns with the eligible applicant. This may include NRCS visits to the property or applicant visits to the USDA office to discuss alternatives and program requirements. Any applicant who does not own the enrolled land will also be required to obtain the landowner's signature to apply for permanent practices.

3. USDA develops a draft conservation plan, a proposed Schedule of Operations including proposed payments, and finalizes the program application package. The applicant reviews, makes corrections to and signs the final program application package. The signature indicates the applicant's agreement with the contract items, including the schedule, extent and payment amounts.

Only limited changes to the application will be allowed after this point, so it is important for the applicant to be fully engaged in this step.

4. USDA selects applications for contracting based on available funding.
5. The applicant and USDA complete contract documents. The applicant should be aware of all contract terms, requirements and penalties for non-compliance before signing. After NRCS signature, the applicant may begin installing the contracted practices.
6. Once an application is funded, the applicant must continue to meet Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions throughout the contract period in order to receive program payments.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

Applying for Federal Farm Conservation Programs



A federal farm conservation program contract (CPC) is a **legal, binding agreement** between the federal government and an eligible program participant. Under terms of the CPC, the participant receives a payment for implementing a conservation practice. The federal government receives off-farm environmental benefits associated with the conservation practice.

Only a limited number of practices associated with high priority environmental concerns are available for a CPC. These practices vary from state to state as priorities change across regions.

The payment rate for each practice is based on both the cost of practice implementation and the relative value of the environmental benefits received, as determined by the state technical advisory committee on an annual basis.

Contract payments are made to participants based on the extent of the practice performed, reflective of the benefits received. Practices must meet minimum specifications to achieve the desired environmental benefits prior to payment.

Programs Covered

AMA	<i>Agricultural Management Assistance</i>
CRP	<i>Conservation Reserve Program</i>
CREP	<i>Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program</i>
CSP	<i>Conservation Stewardship Program</i>
EQIP	<i>Environmental Quality Incentives Program</i>
GRP	<i>Grassland Reserve Program</i>
SAFE	<i>State Acres for Wildlife Program</i>
WHIP	<i>Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program</i>
WRP	<i>Wetland Reserve Program</i>

Eligibility Documentation

Eligibility criteria for entering into a CPC are established by Congress in the Farm Bill and vary by conservation program. The specific requirements can be found by visiting your local field office. It is the applicant's responsibility to submit the required documentation.



Basic Requirements

- Applicants must have control of the land for the term of the proposed contract. "Control" is defined as possession of the land by ownership, written lease, or other legal agreement.
- Applicants must comply with the provisions for protecting the interests of the tenants, which includes the provisions for sharing payments. Before any tenant can be excluded from a contract, written consent must be obtained.
- Applicants must be engaged in agricultural production (including forestry) or have an interest in the agricultural operation associated with the land being offered for enrollment.
- For an entity, such as a family owned business or non-profit, the applicant must have the legal authority to act on behalf of the entity. The CCC-901A or CCC-902 will identify which member(s) may sign on behalf of the entity. If the entity would like a non-member to sign on its behalf, then FSA-211 must be completed to authorize a person to act on the entity's behalf. All members of the entity will be required to individually complete certain documents.

Definitions

Applicant – an 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, corporation (limited liability or other), joint venture, 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.

Application Forms

Applications are available at any USDA Service Center, or you can request them to be sent to you by calling your local USDA Service Center. There are different forms used by the programs:

CRP, CREP, and SAFE - Conservation Reserve Program Worksheet (CRP2)

AMA, WHIP, CSP, EQIP, and WRP - Conservation Program Application (NRCS-CPA-1200)

GRP - Application for Long-Term Contracted Assistance (AD1153)

Other Forms Required

AD-1026 - All applicants are required to complete a Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification if one is not already on file for the current crop year.

CCC-931 - Applicants are required to fill out a Payment Eligibility Average Adjusted Gross Income Certification. Federal conservation programs exclude from eligibility for conservation programs applicants who have an average annual adjusted gross income (AGI) greater than \$1 million for the three tax years preceding the application fiscal year, unless more than 2/3 of their AGI is derived from farming or forestry operations.

CCC-901A - For all entities, a CCC901A form is needed to identify the members of the entity and the percent ownership of each member.

CCC-902 - Form CCC-902 may be required by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to determine the applicant eligibility for some program payments. Original legal documents for the applicant must accompany these forms, providing supporting documentation for their farming operation.

CCC-902-P - for an Individual Person

CCC-902-E - for a Corporation, General Partnership, Limited Partnership, Joint Venture, or other Entity

SF-1199a - A Direct Deposit Sign-up Form with electronic funds transfer information is required to establish the vendor record and ensure the correct name and tax ID have been used. All USDA program payments are made through direct deposit.

Conservation Planning Worksheet - New applicants to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are required to complete a Conservation Planning Worksheet that provides basic information about their farm operation, resource concerns, and goals.

Applicants may also be asked to verify their status using IRS tax records if they self-certify as a Beginning Farmer.