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# News Release

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## USDA Accepting Applications for Nation's Largest Conservation Program

**PHOENIX**, Nov. 14, 2016 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting and processing applications for enrollment in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the nation's largest conservation program.

NRCS has made several updates to the program this year to help producers better evaluate their conservation options and the benefits to their operations and natural resources. New methods and software for evaluating applications will help producers see up front why they are or are not meeting stewardship thresholds, and allow them to pick practices and enhancements that work for their conservation objectives. These new tools also allow producers to see potential payment scenarios for conservation early in the process.

"This year, the Conservation Stewardship Program provides even more opportunities for conservation and greater flexibility at the local level to prioritize resource concerns and conservation approaches," says Keisha Tatem, NRCS Arizona state conservationist. "Customized CSP tools for Arizona will improve the customer experience during application evaluations."

NRCS has addressed producer and stakeholder input requesting greater flexibility to address local resource concerns. Now, NRCS will more effectively utilize input from farmers, ranchers and partners in State Technical Advisory Committees and local workgroups to inform and expand conservation strategies under the program. Producers will be better prepared to apply because they will know these local ranking priorities and targeted resource concerns in advance.

NRCS offices will process applications for the program with sign-up running through February 3, 2017. Producers interested in the program can find more information on the new CSP portal, located at <http://go.usa.gov/x8RmH> or by contacting your local NRCS service center, which can be found at [offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=AZ](http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=AZ).

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