



Iowa Bulletin: 440-26-1

Date: February 10, 2026

Subject: PGM – Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Conservation Stewardship
Program (CSP) Implementation Guidance

Action Required By:

January 15, 2026 – CSP Classic Application Batching Date Deadline

April 3, 2026 – Ranking Deadline

August 1, 2026 - CSP Classic Obligation Deadline

Purpose. To provide FY 2026 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) implementation guidance and deadlines.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2026

Background. Annually Iowa provides guidance and direction for implementing CSP. The guidance provides deadlines, eligibility, planning, and documentation requirements.

Explanation. Iowa will use the information contained in this bulletin and policy contained in Title 440, Conservation Program Manual (CPM), Part 530 to evaluate and obligate FY 2026 CSP applications.

Additional information is available on the [Iowa SharePoint](#) and [National CSP website](#) for documents needed for the FY 2026 CSP Classic sign-ups.

Follow timeline for implementation of the Conservation Stewardship Program in FY 2026:

1. FY 2026 CSP Annual Payments

Deadline	Activity
December 19, 2025	Approve payment requests for payments occurring in calendar year 2025
February 27, 2026	Approve payment requests for payments occurring in calendar year 2026

2. FY 2026 CSP Classic Timeline

Deadline	Activity
January 15, 2026	FY 2026 CSP Classic: application batching cut-off date. To be eligible applications must be entered into ProTracts by deadline.

April 3, 2026	FY 2026 CSP Classic: complete assessment and ranking in the Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART). Application selection will occur within one week after the ranking deadline. Selections will continue to be made with applications that were submitted by his deadline until funding is exhausted. Unranked, pending, and/or applications with no uploaded costs or estimates will not be considered.
August 15, 2026	FY 2026 CSP Classic selections obligation deadline.

3. CSP Eligibility Documentation

When a program application Form CPA-1200 is received, the field office will date stamp it, enter it into ProTracts with the date signed by applicant, and review it for completeness. The field office must inform the applicant in writing (via email or USPS) of any items needed to make the application complete. The application will remain in "Pending" status until the required information is received to determine eligibility. The application will be switched to "Eligible" when all eligibility criteria has been met. Required for eligibility includes Program eligibility, Field Tract Eligibility (FTE), AD-1026 filed and Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) are required by contract obligation.

For Crop and Pasture: Iowa NRCS acquires the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Producer Farm Data Report (PFDR) from FSA Farm Records System, to determine the applicant's agricultural operation. Form 156EZ from FSA Farm Records may be used to provide additional supporting documentation for the applicant's agricultural operation. Tenant or sharecropper consent must be received if excluding a producer from a contract.

For crop history, crop production is required for four of the six years prior to December 20, 2018. When available, use FSA records or other documentation such as historical aerial photography, producer records, etc., to verify compliance with crop history requirement. It is recommended to use historical aerial photography from years 2013, 2014, or 2015.

Use acres from common land unit (CLU) layer in Conservation Desktop (CD) for eligible acres in contract. Program acres will be attributed to the hundredth of an acre in CD for planning. For any plans already completed to the tenth of the acres, planners are not expected to go back and update to the hundredth of the acre. Total eligible crop acres for each tract should match effective Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) acres. If they do not, document the discrepancy on the PFDR. Document the eligible acres and control of land on the PFDR for each tract.

Note: Due to rounding occurring in ProTracts, contract acres may be more than eligible FSA acres listed on the Producer Farm Data Report. Staff must document in the Form CPA-6 notes why there is a discrepancy and proceed with planning.

Eligibility required designations on Producer Farm Data Report are:

- COL = Applicant has control of land for the life of the contract.
- No COL = Applicant does not have control of land for the life of the contract.
- NE-CRP = Not eligible because acres are enrolled in CRP. Use only when the CRP acres are included in the effective DCP acres.
- NE-NA = Not eligible because the land is newly acquired, and the applicant has not demonstrated their management system yet.
- NE-SB = Not eligible because acres were sod busted after December 20, 2018.
- NE-CSP18 = Not eligible because land is in another CSP18 CSP contract.

For Forestry and Associated Ag Land: When available, use FSA records such as the Form FSA-578 or Producer Farm Data Report. If FSA records are not available, a lease, deed, tax parcel data or written notice of control from a landowner may be used.

Associated Agricultural Land (AAL) must be included in the agricultural operation and evaluated if controlled by the applicant. AAL must be associated with an agricultural or nonindustrial private forest land (NIPF) operation and cannot be enrolled on its own.

For Farmstead: If 50% or more of the land use is farmstead and associated agland in the operation, applicants should use the Farmstead category.

4. Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART) Instructions

Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART) is the business tool used to document resource concern assessment. Conservation planners must follow the guidance in the CART Resource Concern Assessment FY 2026 to evaluate resource conditions for consistency. Additional CART resources can be found on the [National CART SharePoint](#) site.

The following must be completed before **ranking** applications:

- Evaluate all Special Environmental Concerns (Form CPA-52 Sections G and J) for existing conditions, no action impacts, and preferred alternative impacts.
- Cultural resources process, except consultation (if required).
- All applicable Threatened and Endangered Species Assessments. Consultation, if required, will be initiated.
- If permits are required but not obtained, the permits must have a high likelihood of approval. List all required permits on the Environmental Evaluation (Form CPA-52 Section K) (e.g., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit, Iowa Department of Natural Resources floodplain permit, county floodplain permit, etc.). Document on the Environmental Evaluation permits must be approved before construction starts.

The following must be completed before **obligating** applications:

- Entire cultural resources review procedures.
- Consultation for Threatened and Endangered species.
- Environmental Evaluation (Form CPA-52) completed and signed.

5. Annual Payments

A few changes occurred with CSP annual payments starting in FY 2026. The Existing Activity Payment (EAP) will be \$4,000/year per contract for all new contracts. The unique enhancement codes will no longer be used. Implementation of a practice will be done according to Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) conservation practice standard implementation requirements (IRs) and practice designs. Contract limits will be as follows:

- \$300,000 for individuals and entities
- \$600,000 for Joint Operations (Business Type 2 or 3)

6. Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP)

Regenerative agriculture is a conservation management approach that addresses natural resource concerns through soil health, water management, and biodiversity to improve the productivity and prosperity of agriculture. Listed below are the criteria for eligibility:

- Whole farm assessment
- Plan at least one primary regenerative management practice
- Soil testing in the first and last year of the contract (CEMA 216)

Funds will be 25% of Iowa's CSP allocation for RPP contracts. Please reference the [Regenerative Pilot Program](#) for program specifics.

Regenerative Conservation Practices

Code	Practice Name	Crop	Forest	Pasture
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	Y	N	N
330	Contour Farming	Y	N	N
340	Cover Crop	Y	Y	N
554	Drainage Water Management	Y	Y	Y
511	Forage Harvest Management	Y	Y	Y
666	Forest Stand Improvement	N	Y	N
449	Irrigation Water Management	Y	Y	N
484	Mulching	Y	Y	Y
590	Nutrient Management	Y	Y	N
595	Pest Management Conservation System	Y	Y	Y
528	Grazing Management	Y	Y	Y
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	Y	N	N

345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced	Y	N	N
585	Stripcropping	Y	N	N
CEMA 216	Soil health Testing	Y	Y	Y
CEMA 217	Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management	Y	Y	Y

7. Ranking pools and categories

For FY 2026, Iowa will have 5 ranking pools. There will be one (1) Agland ranking pool for each of the 4 Areas (4 pools) and one (1) statewide pool for non-industrial private forest (NIPF) land.

Each of the five (5) ranking pools will have categories within the pools to meet national fund requirements for CSP. List below are CSP categories for funding:

Beginning Producer	Organic Operation
Socially Disadvantaged Producer	Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP)
Source Water Protection	Farmstead only
Resource Team	Reserve

8. Newly acquired/Newly eligible Land

Beginning in FY 2026, newly acquired or newly eligible land that is included in an operation under an existing CSP contract may have an opportunity to be modified into the existing contract. Policy in 440-CPM-530-Q will reflect this change for FY 2026 and forward.

The process begins with a request from the participant to add newly acquired or newly eligible land to an active contract. The new land will be evaluated independently to determine stewardship threshold eligibility utilizing CART to assess resource concerns. Participants will be required to implement an additional conservation activity or expand contracted activities on the new land as stated in 440-CPM-530-Q-530.305. Use Conservation Desktop (CD) to add requested primary land uses (PLUs) to the existing Practice Schedule. Once the Stewardship Threshold is documented and met, practices should be digitized. A ProTracts modification is then initiated and new land and activities can be added. Use the 'Other' modification type in ProTracts to support these changes.

9. Waiver To Start Prior To Obligation

The process for requesting and approval of Early Start Waivers will follow 440-CPM-530-C-530.23 B. The State Conservationist has granted permission for the Assistant State Conservationists for Field Operations (ASTC-FOs) to approve waivers for the applicant to start activities prior to contract obligation.

The Early Start Waiver is used in situations where activities are scheduled in year one of the application and the contract will not be obligated by the time the activities need to be applied. The waiver is not allowed if the applicant has commenced the activity. A copy of the approved waiver must be kept in the case file.

The following items are required when requesting an Early Start Waiver:

- Written request for waiver from the applicant and must be dated (email is acceptable).
- Name of program the waiver is being requested for.
- List of activities the applicant is requesting to start early.
- Completed practice Design/Implementation Requirement (IR) as per FOTG
- Reason for the waiver is being requested.
- Signed Form CPA-1200 application form.
- Completed Environmental Evaluation (Form CPA-52).
- Application must be assessed in CART with a Record of Decision and Plan Map attached.
- A conversation with applicant tan Early Start Waiver is not a guarantee of funding must be documented on Form CPA-6.

10. Special Documentation Requirements for Contracting

The following documentation is required:

- Use of the current 6-part Folder Checklist is required.
- Participant signatures on forms must be consistent (example: if applicant signs as an individual on the Form CPA-1200, the contract must also be with the individual).
- CART Summary Reports used for eligibility determinations (including CART revisions during contract modifications) are kept in the contract folder.
- Field verification findings are to be documented on Form CPA-6.
- Form CPA-1155, "Conservation Plan or Schedule of Operations" and Form CPA-1156, "Revision of Plan/Schedule of Operations or Modification of a Contract" requires the district conservationist's electronic signature certifying technical adequacy prior to participant signatures.
- The approving official's electronic signature must be printed and placed in the contract file for Forms CPA-1202, CPA-1155, and all CPA-1156 forms.
- An entry on Form CPA-6 is required to document participant received obligated contract documents.

Contact. If you have questions, please contact Rubyana Neely, CSP coordinator, at (515) 323-2224 or rubyana.neely@usda.gov.



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